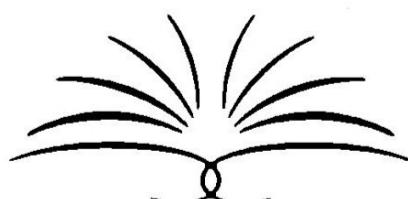


# THE ISMĀ‘ILĪ-SUFI SAGE OF PAMIR

Mubārak-i Wakhānī  
and the Esoteric Tradition  
of the Pamiri Muslims

*Abdulmamad Iloliev*



C A M B R I A  
P R E S S

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*In the loving memory of my mother,  
Reza Alidodova*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>List of Plates</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Note on the Transliteration</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>xvii</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Ismā‘īlī Tradition in Pamir: Legends and History</b>	<b>27</b>
1.1. The Spread of the Ismā‘īlī Mission in Pamir and Badakhshan	27
1.2. The Formation of the Indigenous Faith of “the Fivers”: <i>Panj-Tanī</i>	36
<b>Chapter 2. Mubārak: Life and Times</b>	<b>53</b>
2.1. Historical Context: An Overview	53
2.2. Pirship: An Institution of Social Control and Organisation	56
2.3. A Biography of Mubārak	60
2.4. Sufi	71
2.5. Poet	84
2.6. Musician	87
2.7. Astronomer	92
2.8. Papermaker and Painter	95
2.9. Mubārak’s Perception of Religious Tolerance	104

<b>Chapter 3. Thought: ‘Sufisised Ismā‘īlism’</b>	<b>113</b>
3.1. Spectrum of Thought	113
3.2. Relations and Influences	128
3.3. Love	134
3.4. The Beloved	145
3.5. The Guide	150
<b>Chapter 4. <i>Chihil Dunyā</i>: The World of Divine Secrets</b>	<b>161</b>
4.1. The Text, Its Genre and Stylistic Structure	161
4.2. The Thematic Structure and Paraphrasable Content	162
4.3. The Main Argument and the Major Themes	165
4.4. The Testimonies of the Six Eminent Prophets	166
4.5. The Denouement of the Prophet’s First <i>Mi‘rāj</i>	177
4.6. The Second <i>Mi‘rāj</i> of the Prophet	185
4.7. Muhammad in the Divine Wonderland	191
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>213</b>
Original Sources (Unpublished Manuscripts)	213
Secondary Sources: English	214
Secondary Sources: Russian, Tajik and Persian	225
<b>Index</b>	<b>233</b>

## LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1.	Mubārak-i Wakhānī's tomb in the village of Yamg.	67
Plate 2.	The tomb facing the village.	68
Plate 3.	Mubārak-i Wakhānī's museum-shrine: The main gate.	70
Plate 4.	The terrace of the museum-shrine.	71
Plate 5.	Mubārak's Chamber of Retreat: <i>Chilla Khāna</i> .	80
Plate 6.	The reconstructed <i>Chilla Khāna</i> next to the museum-shrine.	80
Plate 7.	"A doorway toward eternity"—Mubārak's stone inscription.	82
Plate 8.	Mubārak's stone inscription enlarged.	83
Plate 9.	<i>Baland-maqām</i> , a musical instrument of religious importance.	90
Plate 10.	The backside of the instrument.	91
Plate 11.	Mubārak's great-grandson Zarabo with <i>Baland-maqām</i> .	91



Plate 12. Sang-i Āftāb-bīn, Mubārak's stone calendar in Yamg.	93
Plate 13. <i>Sang-i Āftāb-bīn</i> in use.	94
Plate 14. <i>Sang-i Nishān</i> : The signpost stone.	95
Plate 15. <i>Naqsh-i Dālān</i> (Corridor Painting): The corridor's sunroof.	99
Plate 16. <i>Naqsh-i Dālān</i> : Decorated beams in the ceiling of the corridor.	99
Plate 17. <i>Naqsh-i Dālān</i> : Decorated beams in the ceiling of the corridor.	100
Plate 18. “The flight of soul”—a symbolic image from the • <i>ālib al-Matlūb</i> .	102
Plate 19. The format of the first pages of Mubārak's manuscripts: An example of the <i>Kalām-i Sa•ādat</i> .	103
Plate 20. Some illustrated folios from the <i>Kalām-i Sa•ādat</i> .	103
Plate 21. Some illustrated folios from the <i>Kalām-i Sa•ādat</i> .	104

# PREFACE

The materials utilised in this work are original manuscripts, which I examined during my several research trips to Tajikistan as a PhD student at Cambridge University. Most of those manuscripts, belonging to Mubārak-i Wakhānī, have never before been the focus of sustained research coverage; indeed, their very existence was known only to a very restricted circle of Mubārak's relatives, and some local scholars, who have hitherto been unable to either study or analyse them in any great depth. Therefore, the originality claimed for this work is in its attempt to be the first introductory study of Mubārak-i Wakhānī and his contribution to Ismā'īlī thought and the Persian poetic tradition. It advances a broader argument concerning the impact of cultural and religious diversity on the composition of the Ismā'īlī tradition, a dimension of Ismā'īlī studies hitherto largely overlooked by historians and Islamic specialists.

It is worth clarifying at the outset that the term 'Pamir' and its adjective (Pamiri) is deployed in the context of the modern autonomous province (*vilāyat*) of Tajik Badakhshan (Gorno-Badakhshan) or VMKB (*Vilāyat-i Mukhtār-i Kuhistān-i Badakhshān*), which was established in

1925 on the basis of its ethno-cultural differences four years prior to the formal creation of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Tajikistan as an equal member of the USSR.

Pamir, a mountainous area in the southeast of Tajikistan and northeast of Afghanistan, is the only region in the world where the Shī‘ī Ismā‘īlī Muslims have subsisted compactly in their homogenous historic land since the eleventh century. Demographically, Gorno-Badakhshan is a unique place for the Ismā‘īlīs, as they are in the majority and formally constitute a semi independent political entity within the Republic of Tajikistan.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For permission to have an unrestricted access to Mubārak-i Wakhānī’s manuscripts as well as providing personal assistance, grateful thanks are extended to the following staff members of the Mubārak-i Wakhānī’s Museum-Shrine in Yamg, Tajikistan: Mamadbek Qurbonov, the village *khalīfa*, Haydarmamat Malikmamatov, the director of the museum-shrine, Ahmadbek Bandishoev, the custodian of the museum-shrine, and Lutfullah Zaraboev, Mubārak’s great-grandson and the main keeper of the poet’s manuscripts.

Likewise, I owe thanks to my interviewees, Jumaqul Davlatqadamov, Muborakqadam Bandishoev and Jahan Ara, who provided me with enormous legends and anecdotes about Mubārak-i Wakhānī and the indigenous Pamiri Ismā‘īlī tradition.

I am grateful also for the support of Dr. Charles Melville, my MPhil and PhD supervisor at Cambridge University, Dr. Magnus Marsden for the proofreading of my manuscript and my colleagues at the Institute of Ismā‘īlī Studies Rahim Gholami and Otambek Mastibekov for the kind suggestions concerning Persian translations and transliterations.

I am indebted to the Institute of Ismā‘īlī Studies in London, especially to His Highness the Aga Khan, the present Shīr Ismā‘īlī Imam, for granting extended leave and moral support during my studies in the United Kingdom.

This work would have not been possible without the prayers, encouragements and tremendous moral support provided by the members of my family.

# NOTE ON THE TRANSLITERATION



The scheme of transliteration that has been adopted for the Arabic, Persian (Tajik) and some Russian words in this study generally agrees with that of the latest edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam (1997) with the following modifications:

j instead of dj	ج
q instead of қ	ق
v instead of w	و and diphthong au instead of aw
	(in Persian or Persianised words)
ch instead of č	چ

Likewise, the following letters are used without being underlined: kh (خ), sh (ش), dh (ڏ), th (ٿ) and gh (غ) and zh (ڇ).

All non-English words, except some well-known Arabic and Persian terms, such as Allah, Muhammad, Muslim, Islam, Imam, Imamate, Sunni, Sufi, Tajik, Afghan, Badakhshan and Pamir, are italicised (except people and places' names) and transliterated. In addition, several new words and expressions are deployed in this work, either originating from or used in Tajik and Wakhī languages. The pronunciation of those words follows English usage with a few exceptions. For instance, ô is to be pronounced as in 'door'.



# ABBREVIATIONS

AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
‘Alī	‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib
AN SSSR	<i>Akademii Nauk Soyza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik</i> (the Academy of Science of USSR)
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
IIS	The Institute of Ismaili Studies
JBBRAC	<i>Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JRAC	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
Mubārak	Mubārak-i Wakhānī
Nāṣir	Nāṣir-i Khusraw
RAN	<i>Rossiyskiy Akademii Nauk</i> (the Russian Academy of Science)
RAS	Royal Asiatic Society
USSR	Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics
VMKB	<i>Vilāyat-i Mukhtār-i Kuhistān-i Badakhshān</i> (in Russian GBAO—the Autonomous Region of the Mountainous Badakhshan)



# THE ISMĀ‘ĪLĪ-SUFI SAGE OF PAMIR



# INTRODUCTION

The name of Mubārak-i Wakhānī (1839–1903), a Persian (Tajik) mystic poet, musician, astronomer and Ismā‘īlī religious scholar from Badakhshan, is hardly known in modern academic circles related to Persian and Ismā‘īlī studies. Despite his importance to Ismā‘īlī esoteric thought in general and the Ismā‘īlī tradition of the peoples of the Pamir Mountains in particular, Mubārak has received only scant attention from modern scholars.

One of the major reasons for Mubārak’s relative obscurity is probably the geographic location of his homeland and its socio-economic, political and intellectual environment. As Mubārak’s pen-name (Wakhānī) indicates, he came from the valley of Wakhān—a remote area located between the high mountains of the Pamirs to the north and Hindukush to the south. The valley is divided by the river Panj, the main source of the Amu-Daryā (Oxus), into Tajik and Afghan Wakhān. Although, historically, the Wakhān corridor was one of the trade routes of the famous ‘Silk Road’, it did not have a substantial economic impact on the region. For Wakhān was a commercially insignificant market, and the route

merely served as a short and safe passageway for Chinese and Central Asian merchants travelling from China to Badakhshan and then to the other parts of Central Asia and vice versa. The region, thus, remained economically undeveloped until the establishment of the Soviet reign in Tajikistan. Its dominant agrarian economy entirely depended on animal husbandry and a small portion of its cultivated land (almost 98% of its territory is mountainous), the products of which were merely meant for domestic use. There were no higher education institutions, such as madrasas or mosques, except for a few home-based private schools to which very few people had access; thus, the majority of the population was illiterate.<sup>1</sup> Hence, due to its geographic location and economic backwardness, the region remained almost inaccessible to and ignored by foreign scholars and politicians until the late nineteenth century when the first open interaction with Europe began. However, this interaction, which occurred towards the end of Mubārak’s life, commenced during the Anglo-Russian political and military contest of Central Asia, known as ‘the Great Game’ that consequently worsened the situation of the Wakhīs. The region was subjugated by the Afghan troops of ‘Abd al-Rahmān Khān (d.1901), who spread a reign of fear and terror throughout the region. The Ismā‘ilīs of Wakhān, like the rest of the Pamir principalities (Rushān, Shughnān, Ghārān and Ishkāshim), endured both political and sectarian persecution from the Sunni Afghans. This situation continued until the Russians took control and divided (in agreement with the British) the entire Pamir region into the Tajik and Afghan provinces. For the inhabitants of the Afghan Pamir, the religio-political persecution continued.

With the establishment of the VMKB, however, to which Wakhān was included as a district, the Soviet government modified the region’s economic infrastructure and transformed it into one of the more prosperous oblasts in the USSR by the post-Second World War period. Several educational institutions and academic research centres were established, including schools, colleges, universities and the Tajik Academy of Science with its specific research branches. Nevertheless, the anti-religious atheistic policy of the Communist government, which had strict control

over all academic institutions, restricted the study of religion in general and religious scholars in particular.<sup>2</sup> Several famous Islamic mystics, scholars and theologians, like Rudakī, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Ḥāfiẓ, Rūmī, Khayyām and many others, were portrayed only as ‘national’ Tajik poets, whose poetry, as the Communist scholars believed, expressed ‘anti-feudal sentiments’ and promoted ideas such as ‘equality’, ‘freedom’ and ‘patriotism’, in order to support the dogmatic Communist doctrine of the class struggle and inequality in the feudal oppressed society. Their religious aspects were almost ignored, because religion, as such, was interpreted like Karl Marx, as “the opium of the people”. The case was far worse for local religious scholars like Mubārak, whose Ismā‘īlī esoteric philosophy was probably, in fact, less ‘communistic’ than that of others.

There are few references to Mubārak in Tajik and Russian sources that only mention his name and some of his major works. The first written reference to him detected so far occurs in his own manuscript entitled *Tarjamat al-Bayān* (the Clarity of Meaning) which is written in a poetic panegyric style by the local Badakhshani historian, Faḍl’alī Bek Surkhafṣar. He praises Mubārak for his devotion to the chosen path:<sup>3</sup>

ای مبارک به تو آفری——ن  
نسیبت کند حور و خلد برین  
تو ای پاکدامن گرفتی نوشتنی ورق  
هر آنچه گرفتی سبق

O Mubārak, praise be upon you!  
You deserve the nymph of paradise and eternity.  
O the pious man, you have taken lessons,  
And wrote pages of whatever knowledge you obtained.<sup>4</sup>

Bertels was the first Soviet orientalist to introduce Mubārak’s name to the academic world. During his research project in Pamir (1959–63), Bertels compiled an index of the region’s old manuscripts, in which seven books of Mubārak were also included.<sup>5</sup> Although there is not much evidence about Mubārak in Bertels’ report, this may be one of the first scholarly references to the poet’s name and works. In 1984, Bertels gave a series of lectures on the Ismā‘īlīs of Badakhshan, their history,

culture and tradition, at the Institute of Ismā'īlī Studies in London. In one of those lectures, which were audio recorded, while discussing the local Badakhshani literature, he briefly refers to Mubārak and some of his works. Appreciating Mubārak's intellectual capacity to cope with the sciences of his time, Bertels describes him as an extraordinary person and 'the Avicenna of his time'. Nevertheless, as Bertels himself acknowledges, he did not have sufficient time to study the vast works of Mubārak or even publish one of them.<sup>6</sup> Relatively serious attention to Mubārak was paid by a Tajik scholar, Abibov, who in his encyclopaedic monologue, *Ganj-i Badakhshān* (Treasure of Badakhshan) and later *Az Tārīkh-i Adabiyyāt-i Tājīk dar Badakhshān* (A History of Tajik Literature in Badakhshan) briefly presents a descriptive account of the pre-Soviet poets of the region. He also touches upon some moments in Mubārak's life and works. Abibov did a remarkable job in highlighting Mubārak's name and his major works, but it seems that the political situation of his time did not allow him to break down the ideological barriers and look deeper into the religious message conveyed by Mubārak. Thus, both his autobiographic and bibliographic accounts of Mubārak remain very narrow in both form and meaning.<sup>7</sup>

It, thus, remains a fact that, hitherto no serious scholarly research has been done on Mubārak's life and works, and this book attempts to be the first introductory study on the subject. The principle goal is to provide a systematic presentation of a seminal Islamic figure. In order to establish an accurate biography of Mubārak, and to render his often confused Ismā'īlī-Sufi ideas as lucidly and coherently as possible, this study concentrates on assessing his life and thoughts in their historical and religious context. It explores how far Mubārak's works represent the indigenous Pamiri perception of Ismā'īlism and where he stands in relation to general Ismā'īlī thought. Likewise, through the study of the works of Mubārak, it seeks to explore the distinctive elements of Pamiri Ismā'īlism, which itself is an interesting, but relatively neglected area in religio-cultural studies of the minor nations within the former Soviet Union. Very little scholarly attention has been paid towards the study of the religious history of the peoples of Pamir and their

intellectual representatives. This, however, does not mean that the subject is unimportant; on the contrary, case studies of particular individuals, like Mubārak, show that the popular religious tradition of the people of Pamir was strongly supported by the constant intellectual contributions of its eminent scholars.

At the risk of labouring the obvious, it is important to note that when the word ‘Ismā‘īlism’ is attached to any adjective derived from a name of a locality, such as ‘Pamiri’, it not only changes the meaning of the adjective from a geographic to a religious sense, but also redefines the application of Ismā‘īlī beliefs and practices accordingly. Here, the phrase ‘Pamiri Ismā‘īlism’ is employed in relation to the Ismā‘īlī religious tradition, its historical development and doctrinal enhancement among the mountain people of Wakhān, Ishkāshim, Ghārān, Shākh dara, Shughnān, Bartang, Rushān and partly Murghāb and Darvāz.<sup>8</sup> It is true that the core principle of the Ismā‘īlī doctrine—the belief in an unrestricted religious authority and rightful guidance of the Ismā‘īlī Imam, whose authority is based on the concept of *ahl al-bayt* (the family of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fātima and his cousin and son in law ‘Alī)—is what unifies the entire Ismā‘īlī community around the world. Nevertheless, the practice of the faith had always varied from one cultural tradition to another, depending on each tradition’s historical and geographic background.<sup>9</sup> The practical application of this local diversity can be observed in a variety of rites and rituals, such as *madō* (derived from Arabic *madḥ*, i.e., praise, a devotional poetic and musical performance), *Charāgh-Rūshan* ('Candle Lighting'), an action associated with the funeral ceremony), ‘Āshurā (ten days of moaning in honour of Imam Ḥusayn) and many others in the context of Pamir. For its theoretical expression, nevertheless, one should consider the works of the local intellectuals, like Mubārak-i Wakhānī, who indeed is a window to understanding the complexities of the Pamiri Ismā‘īlī tradition throughout history.

In order to determine his place in the diverse Ismā‘īlī tradition of the people of Pamir, the first chapter of this study presents a brief historical survey of this tradition since its establishment up until the time of Mubārak.

The history of the expansion of the Ismā‘ilī *da‘wa* (mission) in Pamir and Badakhshan remains obscure. It is not known when exactly Ismā‘ilism arrived in the region and whether it was the first Islamic branch to accommodate the variety of indigenous beliefs and practices (veneration of the sun and the moon, cult of spirits, and elements of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Shamanism) of the pre-Islamic period in its doctrinal framework. Nevertheless, it is a matter of historic fact that in the eleventh century an Ismā‘ilī *dā‘ī* (missionary) and famous Persian poet-traveller, Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d.1080), arrived in Badakhshan and spent the rest of his life there preaching the Fātimid Ismā‘ilī *da‘wa*.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, it is with his name that the local Ismā‘ilī tradition identifies itself, regarding him as the *Pīr* (the religious guide) of Kuhistān (i.e., Badakhshan and Pamir). It is, therefore, argued in this study that, although unique cases of conversion (usually that of the rulers) to either Islam or Ismā‘ilism could have occurred before Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s trip to the region, the actual course of Islamisation, as a long and continuous process of shifting identities, started with his *da‘wa* in the eleventh century and was continued into the post-Alamut period (thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries) through other missionaries.

This study presents a brief historical account of the religious development in the mountain regions of Pamir from Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s mission until the nineteenth century. More specifically, it examines the historical development of Ismā‘ilism in Pamir during its two main periods, which are identified here as the period of *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* (Nāṣir’s mission) and the period of *Panj-Tanī* (the Fivers) faith. It should be pointed out that this terminological application has an empirical rather than a theoretical implication. Although these two historical periods witnessed substantial doctrinal differences, the religious significance of the terms always remained the same. The term *Panj-Tanī* is derived from a common Shī‘ī perception of ‘the five pure persons’ (*panj tan-i pāk*), including Muhammad, ‘Alī, Fātima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, whose names feature in the Ismā‘ilī hierarchy of sanctity. These names were, of course, the key elements in Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s mission itself and remained the sacred codes of religious conduct henceforward. Likewise, the term *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* did not arbitrarily lose its religious importance in the post-Nāṣir

period, when Pamiri Ismā‘īlism was strongly influenced by the Twelver Shī‘ī, Sufi and other Islamic doctrines. Nāṣir-i Khusraw was indeed the main preacher or in the local context ‘the holy guide’ (*pīr-i qudus*), who embodied the core Ismā‘īlī (Fātimid) principles in the diverse frame of the indigenous religious beliefs and practices and laid the foundations of the Ismā‘īlī community in Badakhshan. It is, however, argued here that his ideas were popularised and their interpretations harmonised with the beliefs, rituals and practices of the indigenous people. Moreover, during the course of Ismā‘īlī history under certain socio-political circumstances the *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* faced changes as well as challenges. Theoretically, therefore, this term is perceived here as a symbolic short-cut to the whole religious tradition of the Pamiris since their conversion to Islam, but historically it covers a period from Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s mission until the middle of the thirteenth century. One of the reasons for this chronological division is the reactivation of the Ismā‘īlī (Nīzārī) mission in Pamir after the fall of the Alamut strongholds.

The Mongol invasion of the Islamic world, which led to the abolishment of the Alamut strongholds, was followed by the persecution of the Ismā‘īlis throughout the Middle East and Transoxiana. Consequently, many Ismā‘īlī *dā‘īs* were forced to take political refuge in locations far from the Mongol invaders and their local collaborators. Hence, the process of Islamisation or rather the indigenisation of Islam in the region was strongly influenced by and increasingly activated during the asylum-seeking movement of the post-Alamūt period. The Ismā‘īlī missionaries acted in accordance with the new strategy employed in the general Ismā‘īlī context; that is, *uṣul al-taqiyya* (a method of precautionary dissimulation of the true religious beliefs), and introduced new ideas connected with Sufism and the Twelver Shī‘ism. Gradually, these ideas became an intrinsic part of the new indigenous faith, that is, the *Panj-Tanī*, a term which until recent years was a matter of religious identity for the Pamiri Ismā‘īlis. Here the *Panj-Tanī* faith is understood as a combination of certain elements of the pre-Islamic rituals, imbued with Islamic meanings, the Fātimid *da‘wa* (Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s teachings) and post-Alamut *taqiyya* ideas.

The organisational structures as well as certain doctrinal features of Pamiri Ismā'īlism clearly indicate that it was deeply influenced by Sufism. However, little scholarly attention has been directed towards the Sufi phenomenon in Ismā'īlism in general and in Pamiri Ismā'īlism in particular.<sup>11</sup> It is worth noticing that this phenomenon is clearly apparent in the works of Mubārak.

As far as the religious context of Mubārak's time is concerned, it was entirely based on the single-faith domination of Pamiri Ismā'īlī orthodoxy with its strong institution of *pirship*, a socio-religious network of the higher religious hierarchy, *pīrān* (religious guides) and their deputies (*khalīfas*). Although Mubārak, as a respected scholar, was necessarily involved in the religious and educational activities of the network, he never restricted himself to its basic local philosophy; he went far beyond the concerns of local Ismā'īlī belief, and became engaged in a wider philosophical discourse about Islamic mysticism.

It is, therefore, intended in chapter 3 of this study to provide a cohesive examination of Mubārak's theosophical discourse in the light of Ismā'īlī esotericism and Sufi mysticism, as a remarkable example of the reconciliation of these two doctrines in the local Pamiri religious context. More specifically, this chapter explores Mubārak's approaches to certain issues relating to Sufi epistemology, ontology and psychology, such as knowledge, unity, truth, illusion and love. Likewise, it discusses the relationship of Mubārak's works to and their influence by the works of other poets and mystics. An examination of his various works reveals that he was mostly influenced by Rūmī's philosophy of love, al-Hallāj's applied asceticism, 'Aṭṭār's mystic symbolism, Ḥāfiẓ and Bīdil's romantic language of the expression of love ('ishq), beauty (*jamāl*) and majesty (*jalāl*).<sup>12</sup> It is true that Mubārak's ideas are strongly influenced by the mainstream of Sufi mysticism and Ismā'īlī esotericism. Nevertheless, his thoughts are original in their own way, for he was able to deploy the core principles of Sufi ideas and methodology, symbols and language in order to create his own system of thought, a fusion of Sufi and Ismā'īlī ideas applied in a sophisticated way in a local religious context.

Love ('ishq) is the central theme of all his works, and the ultimate destiny of his spiritual quest; it is understood by Mubārak as being a divine power that brings the universe into existence, motivates the activity of every creature and wells up in the human heart to establish unity in the midst of multiplicity. This study is mainly based on three of his major books, namely *Dīvān-i Kulliyāt*, *Tālib al-Matlub*, and *Hājāt va Munājāt*, of which the latter is in prose form. It questions Mubārak's notion of the meanings and functions of love, and its power and creativity in the light of Ismā'īlī esotericism and Sufi mysticism. The divine love that he glorifies tends to be less suprasensory but more real than it is assumed to be in the general Sufi context. In other words, it is not simply a love for an extraordinary, non-human entity called 'God', but it is a cult of divine beauty expressed in the concrete form of a human being. Viewed from a slightly different sectarian angle, it is a love for God, whose physical attributes—manifested in a human body of the Imam of the Time (*Imām-i Zamān*)—are as important as his spiritual attributes. Combining Sufi ideas with the Ismā'īlī esoteric (*bātin*) doctrine of God, he creates the object of this love in the persona of the Ismā'īlī Imam. He employs the Sufi language of love to express his ideas about the nature of, as he calls it, the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) as the spiritual representation of the divine essence in the physical body of the Imam of the Time. He uses Sufi methods, both practical (detachment from the physical world's passions; exercising *dhikr*, *chillā-nishīnī*, *madō*) and theoretical (the path of gnosis and love), to achieve his ultimate goal, that is, to be worthy of the Beloved. His mystical poetry, therefore, seeks to establish a state of equilibrium between Ismā'īlī and Sufi philosophy expressed in the finest form of the mystical spirit. The ultimate goal of his spiritual path is to be adequate for the Beloved's spiritual vision (*dīdār*). At the heart of Mubārak's notion of *dīdār*, which is a significant element in Ismā'īlī ritual practice that is meant to embrace the very moment of the Imam's physical congregation with his devotees (*murīdān*), lies the Sufi idea of union with God or annihilation (*fanā'*) in the divinity of the divine unique.<sup>13</sup> What,

nevertheless, makes Mubārak's approach different from that of Sufism is the equal importance of the physical vision (*dīdār-i jusmānī*) of the Beloved with its spiritual manifestation (*dīdār-i ruhānī*) occurring in the mystic's imaginative consciousness. In other words, there did really exist an Ismā‘ilī Imam of the Time for whose *dīdār* Mubārak could have hoped in the realm of the physical world besides the quest for his spiritual vision.

In an effort to balance the Ismā‘ilī esotericism and Sufi mysticism, he developed the existing ‘Sufisised’ (to use Ivanow’s expression)<sup>14</sup> Ismā‘ilism of Pamir in terms of intellectual representation and doctrinal canonisation. Mubārak was probably one of the pioneers of the indigenous religious literary tradition; he not only codified the oral tradition, but also evaluated and put it in an intellectual framework. This argument is mainly presented in chapter 4, where one of his famous books, the *Chihil Dunyā* (the Forty Worlds), a didactic narrative poem (*dāstān*), is examined to show the indigenous perception of such Islamic notions as creation, prophethood and sainthood (or Imamate).

Mubārak’s poetic legacy constitutes over sixteen titles, including sixty thousand verses (*bayts*) that have been detected so far. His works cover a wide array of topics, of which a brief summary is provided in the next section. This is, thus, the first attempt to explore the hitherto unheard voice of Mubārak, which may be regarded as that of a caged nightingale in Persian poetic heritage. Mubārak was a prolific Persian writer, who also had a good command of the Arabic language. Nevertheless, his writing is also noticeably influenced by the Badakhshani dialect of the Tajik language (his native language).<sup>15</sup> The words taken from this context, which are present in Mubārak’s works and which have been employed in this study, are explained appropriately throughout this work.

### Note on the Sources

Modern scholarship on Badakhshan is very short of documentary materials, that is, archives, account books and other relevant historical documents concerning Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s journey to and his mission in Badakhshan

in particular and the spread of Islam in the region in general. The only exceptional historical evidence that proves the fact of his presence in the region are some of his own poetic verses from the *Dīvān-i Kulliyāt* (Collection of Poems) and the *Jāmi‘al-Hikmatayn* (The Sum of Two Wisdoms). In these works, Nāṣir-i Khusraw merely refers to his exile spent in Yumgān (a valley in modern Afghan Badakhshan), and nothing is said about his movement around the Pamir principalities and the kingdom of Badakhshan.<sup>16</sup> Ironically, there is not much evidence in either of these or other genuine works by Nāṣir about his convertees, apart from some complimentary verses dedicated to a local ruler, ‘Alī b. Asad.<sup>17</sup> The gap in the historic evidence, nevertheless, is filled by the vast amounts of indigenous legends and anecdotes about Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s life as well as his mission in Badakhshan. These sources are presented in both oral and some written forms, although the number of the latter is very restricted. Among the conversion narratives, the most remarkable one is *Gawhar-Rīz* (Treasure-fall), which was falsely attributed to Nāṣir-i Khusraw, but gradually canonised by several local authors subsequently. Although the problem concerning the authorship of the manuscript still remains obscure, by examining various copies of it, one can affirm that it does not belong to Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Firstly, the language of the book is closer to the Badakhshani dialect of the Tajik-Persian language, which is mostly used in places like Jurm, Zebāk, Bārak, Ghārān, Ishkāshim, and some villages of Wakhān. Similarly, the book is not composed in Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s elegant linguistic style, but rather in the popular manner of story narration. Secondly, in one of the two versions of the manuscript, which I came across in Badakhshan, certain authors or most probably scribes (*kātib*) are named. The first, *Musammā bi Gawhar-Rīz*, is in the private collection of a *khalīfa* named Khwāja ‘Ārif from Shughnān (Barkharagh). An examination of this manuscript shows that it is a popular narrative that tends to be a collective work of some learned men of the community, who over the centuries, have tried to collect oral traditions and present them in written form. The writing of the book was probably commissioned at a special meeting in which the representatives of two famous local families of the *khūja*<sup>18</sup> clan decided

to compose the history of Sayyid Suhrāb's family, to which they claim to belong:

The sons of Davlatshāh and Shāh Khwāja gathered in the Gul-bakaf village of Munjān, in Faqirshāh's session (*majlis*) to express their concerns about not having alive any eldest (*safīd-rīshān*) members from Sūhrāb's family (*avlād*), who could knew our past. But Davlatshāh's son told them that there is Gawhar-Rīz. He [probably Davlatshāh] asked 'when [he or it] is going to come up with the words (*bā sukhan*)?' The case was like that, so by the grace of Muhammad, may peace be upon him and his family, I was inspired [to write] (f. 75).

Although the name of the author is not clearly expressed, it is highly likely that he belonged to the family of those *khūjas* and used the term *Gawhar-Rīz* not only in the title of the book, but also as a personal nickname. For instance, he comments that, "Gawhar-Rīz is the brother and the obedient slave (*ghulām-i ḥalqa-bargush*) of Khwāja-Jān (a local *pīr*)" (f. 75). In one of the concluding paragraphs, the author states that he composed the book in a poetic style (*ba nazm durust kardam*). This opens up the possibility of assuming that the book was originally composed in prose (*nathr*) form before its transformation into a poetic style (*nazm*). The author asserts that it took him five years to complete the work. The date of the completion of the manuscript (1246/1830) is provided in both number and letter forms in the last pages. It also ends by providing some historical events of the year and stresses the author's membership of the family of the *khūjas*. Two quotations from the manuscript will suffice to illustrate this point.

I finished this book on Thursday of *hijrat-i hurfi ghayn*, *rā*, *mim* and *wāw*. It was the time when the people of Yumgān forced Sulaymān Khān into exile, when Muhammad 'Alī Bek, the lion of the battle, was crowned in the castle of Jurm (f. 75).<sup>19</sup>

Thanks to God that this copy (*nuskha*) was completed before the news of my death. It is the end of the book *Gawhar-Rīz* written by the son of Khwāja 'Abdul Nabī, son of Khwāja Ṣāliḥ-i Yumgī from the family of the *khūjas*, whose line, through several

generations (*pusht*), goes back to Sayyid Sūhrāb-i Valī, in the year of 1246 in Jurm (f. 79).<sup>20</sup>

The most popular nickname for the later scribe in the manuscript is Gulzār-Khān, a *Khwāja* fellow from Suchān (a district in Shughnān). It may be assumed that it was he who copied the manuscript in Jurm and then later somebody brought it to Shughnān. The prologue of the manuscript clearly presents its thematic content, which includes stories about the creation, the prophets, the eighteen branches (*fariqa'*) of Shī'ism and the genealogy of the Ismā'īlī Imams up to Shāh-i Dīn Ḥasan, who seems to be the first Aga Khan, Ḥasan 'Alī Shāh (1804–1881). This manuscript demonstrates a local tradition of continuous contributions to a particular story, where the scribes update certain stories about the later religious developments and genealogical tables of the Imams and the local *Khwājas*. For instance, the latest addition to the manuscript was made on June 28, 1988, by a member of the same family, Shāh Khurtik the son of Shāh Banda, who also updated the genealogical line of the Ismā'īlī Imams and his family tree up to his time.

The manuscript narrates several legends and stories of Shī'ī nature in both poetic and prose styles. It consists of sixteen chapters (referred to as *Gawhar-dāna*) dealing with the stories of creation, the six law-giving prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad), the Shī'ī Imams (both Ismā'īlis and the Twelver Shī'īs), Nāṣir-i Khusraw and his disciples in Badakhshan. One of the most interesting features of this manuscript is its centrist position concerning the genealogy of the Shī'ī Imams of the Imamī (the Twelver Shī'īs) and Ismā'īlī (including late schism) branches. It does not make a sectarian judgment concerning the genealogy of the Shī'ī Imams. On the contrary, it attempts to reconcile those two lines of Imams, first the Imamis and the Ismā'īlis, then the Ismā'īlī branches of the Qāsim-Shāhī (the present followers of the Aga Khan) and the Muḥammad-Shāhī.<sup>21</sup> This reconciliation is made on the basis of the classic Ismā'īlī concept that justifies the break in the line of the Imamate by classifying the Imams into *mustawda'* (lit. trustworthy) and *mustaqarr* (lit. established) types, of equal religious importance.<sup>22</sup>

In order to compare the various copies of the manuscript in various parts of Pamir, I employed a different version of the *Gawhar-Rīz* found in the private collection of Nurmamad Rochibekov in the Yamg village of the Ishkāshim district. The main subject of this version is Nāṣir-i Khusraw's missionary activities in various parts of Badakhshan and the Pamir principalities; it narrates stories about the spread of the Ismā‘ilī *dā'wa* in the region. This version is written vertically on the right hand side of another book called *Dīvān-i Nāṣir ‘Alī*. This is probably due to a lack of paper. The first page of the book is in a very poor condition, which makes it difficult to read. The year 1344 (1924) is shown as the date of copying. This version closely resembles a book called *Bahr al-Akhbār*, which was published in 1992 on the 990th anniversary of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's birth. It is a small version of the *Gawhar-Rīz*. The editor claims that the author of the book is a native of Munjān, Sayyid Jalāl, and that he (i.e., the editor) obtained a copy of the manuscript written (*kitabāt*) by Shāhzāda-Muhammad.<sup>23</sup> However, there are no further comments about the authorship and date of the manuscript.

There are also two other local historico-hagiographic works with the same title *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* (History of Badakhshan), which provide relatively descriptive surveys of the general issues relating to Badakhshan and Pamir's politico-economic and dynastic history. The two copies of the first manuscript were found by Russian scholars in Farghāna and Andijān, cities of modern Uzbekistan. It was twice edited and translated into Russian by Boldirev; first in 1959 and again in 1997.<sup>24</sup> The main author is called Sang Muḥammad Badakhshī, who narrates the historical developments of Badakhshan from 1068 (1657) until 1223 (1809). However, the scribe, who is also the second author, Fadl’alī Bek Surkhafṣar, continues describing events up until the early twentieth century. The second book was written by two teachers from Khorog (the capital of Pamir), Ākhun Sulaymān and Sayyid Futur-Shāh, in the late 1930s.<sup>25</sup> This book, like its predecessor, describes the political and economic history (based on the oral tradition) of Pamir, mostly the Shughnān principality, from early times up until the advent of the Soviet government in Pamir. Although both histories lack comprehensive

information concerning the history of religion, they do mention some important moments in the religious development of Pamir, especially in relation to establishing the genealogical lines or dynastic trees of the local rulers and religious clans of Shughnān. This issue will be further discussed in chapter 1, but, for now, it will suffice to say that these two works are the only representatives of the local historiography prior to the Soviet reign in Pamir and, therefore, one cannot underestimate their historical importance.

The primary sources for this study are Mubārak's manuscripts, which were collected, read and analysed by the author during several research trips to the region. Most of the original manuscripts are kept in Mubārak-i Wakhānī's museum in Yāmg, but some of these are kept in a private collection belonging to the poet's relatives. The total number of the manuscripts is twelve, which contain more than one book (*risāla*), yet one cannot root out the possibility of discovering other manuscripts in the region, especially in the Afghan province of Badakhshan. The existing manuscripts, which have leather bindings, are preserved in a very good condition. It is believed that the paper was produced by Mubārak himself, using a special mechanical tool. Some of his relatives claim that, during the 1960s, the machine was taken away by scholars from St. Petersburg. The handwriting is beautifully presented, mostly in *nasta'līq* script, and contains elements of Islamic art, such as geometric figures and vegetal ornamentation. The main scribe (*kātib*) is Mubārak himself, but some of the books were drafted by one of his students, Mirzā 'Ābid, from the Tughgāz village of Wakhān.

It is necessary to mention that the manuscripts are not marked with categorical numbers and that there is no official library catalogue, either in the museum or in the private collections. Here, therefore, a numerical catalogue is created for each of the twelve manuscripts, which is shown as 'MSS' followed by numbers (one to twelve respectively), in a strict order relating to their year of composition, some of which are clearly indicated by Mubārak in the last pages of the manuscripts. There are also some manuscripts whose date of composition is not yet clear, but it may be assumed that they were composed sometime between 1310/1893

and 1320/1902. Mubārak's earliest work appears to have been composed in 1893, and his last one in 1902. As he himself in the concluding part of his *Dīvān-i Kulliyāt* asserts: "On Saturday 1320 (1902) while 'īd-i Qurbān ('īd al- adhā) was in progress, I stopped writing poetry". He died in the following year.

Almost all of Mubārak's books have the same title format, a combination of geometric and decorative vegetal patterns, and the following common opening phrase in Arabic: "This book is (title) of Mubārak-i Wakhānī". The statistical data about Mubārak's poetry is provided on the basis of his museum-shrine's chronicle accounts, with the author's introductory remarks.

MSS 01, *Qalb al-Ṣafā'* (the Heart of Purity) is said to have been completed on the 39th day of Mubārak's *chilla-nishīnī* (forty days of spiritual meditation in a cave) on the fifth of Rajab, 1310 (23/01/1893). It is a lyrical poem consisting of twenty-seven chapters with 5003 *bayts* (distiches) in 233 folios. The first twelve folios contain a prose prologue. The manuscript is in the museum.

MSS 02 (1310/1893), *Kalām-i- Sa‘ādat* (the Book of Felicity) is a huge collection of poems dealing with the interpretation of the famous *Umm al-Kitāb*. It consists of 384 folios and is preserved in the private collection of Lutfullah Zaraboev in Yamg.<sup>26</sup>

MSS 03 (1313/1896), *Pand-Namā-yi Risālat* (the Prophet's Pearls of Wisdom), is a relatively small collection of ethical poems and some *ghazals*, derived from the Prophet Muhammad's *ḥadīth*. In this book, Mubārak transforms the sayings of the Prophet from prose into poetry. It consists of an introduction, 21 chapters (*bāb*), each representing a single *ḥadīth* concerning certain Islamic moral issues, and 5 additional chapters (*fasl*). The original manuscript is preserved in the museum.

MSS 04 (1314/1896), *Kashf al-Salavāt* (Unveiling the Prayers) consists of five chapters (called *manzil*), including 10087 *bayts* in 354 folios. This poem discusses how humans praise the divine essence, which, according to him, can be demonstrated only through strong morality and the regular fulfilment of religious duties. It also deals with a number of moral issues in which the three main human qualities are

emphasised: patience (*sābirī*), asceticism (*parhīzkarī*) and gratitude (*shakirī*). The original manuscript is in the museum.

MSS 05 (1315/1897) consists of two books (162 folios), *Tālib al-Maṭlub* (A Seeker of the Sought) and *Hājāt va Munājāt* (Needs and the Inward Prayers). The former is a poem consisting of 1785 *bayts*, which deals with divine love and compliments concerning the divine essence. The latter is also concerned with the same issues, but this complementary work is written in prose form, with the addition of some poetry. The manuscript is kept in the museum.

MSS 06 (1317/1899) is a theological discourse named—*Tarjamat al-Bayān* (the Clarity of Meaning). It includes 11 chapters with 2241 verses, in which 17 Qur'ānic verses are interpreted. It is mainly concerned with the refutation of Evil and the role of the six eminent prophets (i.e., Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad) and the Ismā'īlī Imams in the physical world. The manuscript is in the museum.

MSS 07 (1318/1900) contains *Dāstān-i Tafsīr-i Āyāt-i Kalām dar Haqīqat-i Mujādila-yi Iblīs va Ādam* (Commentary on the Qur'ānic Verses Concerning the Truth about Satan and Adam's Dispute). This poem consists of 12 chapters (*fasl*), including 2241 *bayts*, in which 59 verses from the Qur'ān are discussed and provided with commentaries (*tafsīr*). These commentaries mainly deal with the general theological issues, such as Satan's disobedience and refutation of God's command, Adam and Eve's banishment from paradise and the morality behind these events. The original manuscript is located in the museum.

MSS 08 (1320/1902) also includes two of his major works, *Risāla-yi Chihil Dunyā* (Treatise of the Forty Worlds) and *Qatrat al-Bahr* (A Drop from the Ocean), which are composed according to the classic Ismā'īlī principle of the exoteric (*zāhir*) and esoteric (*bātin*) meanings of religion. The main topic of the former is the Ismā'īlī concept of the *Shari'at* (religious law), the *Tariqat* (spiritual path), the *Haqīqat* (religious truth), and the *Ma'rifat* (divine knowledge). The first poem consists of six introductory subsections called *shahādat dar wilāyat-i 'Alī* (Testimony on the Sainthood of 'Alī) and four main chapters with a total number of 768 *bayts*. The key theme of this book is a Shī'ī interpretation

of the *Mīrāj* of the Prophet Muhammad and his spiritual *dīdār* with ‘Alī, who is described as the essence of prophethood (*nubūwwat*) and the Imamate (*Imāmat* or *wilāyat*). In the second poem, which consists of eighteen chapters (1800 *bayts*), the discourse is articulated around some theological issues, such as the creation of the world and human beings. Mubārak’s main argument is that a human being is a drop (*qatra*) in the ocean (*bahr*) of divine light and that it surely will return to its origin sooner or later; therefore the essential obligation of the human being is to remember (*dhikr*) the Lord constantly in order to make that return easier. The original manuscript is in the private collection of Hasan Abdulatkhonov from Yamg.

MSS 09 (1320/1902), *Dīvān-i Kulliyāt* (Collection of Poems) is Mubārak’s essential lyrical composition on various topics, which includes 192 *rubā’īs* (383 *bayts*), 883 *ghazals* (8417 *bayts*), 5 *qaṣida* (228 *bayts*), 8 *tarjī-band* (415 *bayts*), 30 *mukhammas* (688 *bayts*), 6 *mukhammas-mustazād* (1252), 34 *munqabāt* (532 *bayts*), 5 *nāmatbu’* (904 *bayts*), 13 *mustazād* (407 *bayts*), and 1 *sāqī-nāma* (255 *bayts*). The original manuscript is in the private collection of Lutfullah Zaraboev from Yamg. In 1912 one of Mubārak’s students, ‘Ābid-i-Tughgāzī, edited the poet’s *Kulliyāt* into a form of *Bayāz*, including 12 *tarjī-band*, (792 *bayts*), 5 *mustazād* (270 *bayts*), 22 *mukhammas* (638 *bayts*) and 97 *munqabāt* (1242 *bayts*).

MSS 10, *Dīvān-i Ash‘ār* (Collection of Poetry) is a collection of lyric poems, mainly consisting of *ghazals* (4950 *bayts*) and *rubā’īs* (206 *bayts*) on different topics, including divine love and the human effort required to gain it through selfless devotion and asceticism. The original manuscript is with Zaraboev, and an early photocopy of it is preserved in the St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Studies, under the class mark C-1559.

MSS 11 is simply called *Dīvān*, and is a collection of various poems, including one of Mubārak’s complementary poems, *Tughrā-yi Sultānī*, which concerns the forty eighth Ismā‘ilī Imam, Sir Sultān Muḥammad-Shāh (1877–1957). In addition to poetry, the manuscript also contains some panegyric invocations (*munājāt*). The original copy is in the private collection of Lutfullah Zaraboev from Yamg.

MSS 12, *Kitāb-i Tarjī'āt* (the Stanzaic Poems), is a relatively small book (290 pages) of poems, whose main topic is divine love, an extraordinary sensation, whose ultimate goal is the perfection of the human soul through selfless devotion and which is experienced only by a chosen human heart and expressed through his/her thoughts and deeds. The original manuscript is with Lutfullah Zaraboev in Yamg.

The references to the selected poetry in Mubārak's various works, which are used and translated in this study, are made in the following way: MSS, the manuscript number, the folio number, and its division into 'a' and 'b' from right to left (e.g., MSS 01, 1a). In order to distinguish between the various forms of the quoted poetry, it uses various types of formatting.

In addition to the primary sources, this study employs several other secondary materials, which deal with general issues relating to Sufism, Ismā'īlism, and the history of Badakhshan and the Pamir principalities, in English, Russian, Persian and Tajik, as recorded in the bibliography. It is noteworthy that the materials (reports, chronicles, travelogues, essays etc.), which were produced in the nineteenth century, constitute the main body of the written sources on the history, geography and ethnography of Pamir. For the nineteenth century was a significant epoch in Pamir's political as well as cultural life. It was the beginning of the scientific and scholarly discoveries of the region by foreign travellers, especially Europeans and Russians. Of the early European travellers, the most important were J. Wood (in 1839), T. Gordon (in 1873), O. Olufsen (in 1898) and A. Stein (in 1901), all of whom later wrote travelogues on Pamir.<sup>27</sup> These researchers give very general descriptions of the religious life of the Pamiris. For instance, Olufsen describes the shrine culture of the region and its coexistence with Islamic beliefs. He also offers an accurate description of the spatial composition of the Shrine of 'Alī (*Shāh-i Mardān*) in Wakhān.<sup>28</sup> In the travelogues of Stein, who visited almost all parts of Pamir, there is useful information concerning the geography, climate and archaeology of the region. As for the latter, he describes the aforementioned pre-Islamic forts in Wakhān.<sup>29</sup>

An important role in the ethnographical and historical studies of Pamir was played by the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Russian scholars

like I. Zaroobin, W. Ivanow, A. Semyonov, A. Bobrinskiy, M. Andreev, V. Barthold, A. Bertels, A. Snesaryov, A. Stanishevskiy and many others.<sup>30</sup> These scholars mainly deal with the ethnographic and linguistic aspects of Pamir. Similarly, they touch upon certain general religious issues, such as Ismā‘ilī religious philosophy, the life and thoughts of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, and stories about the *pīrs* (religious leaders) and *mīrs* (political leaders) of Badakhshan and Pamir. Although these authors contributed greatly to the cultural study of this region, several important factors of religious life, such as the spread of Ismā‘ilism, its religio-cultural and historical contexts, and the further impacts on the lives of the people of the Pamir mountainous regions remain unresolved.

## Methodology

Taking into consideration the complicated and obscure nature of the stories narrated in the indigenous sources, this study deals with the narratives from a-historical perspective. In other words, it aims to treat information in *Gawhar-Rīz* and other conversion narratives systematically rather than chronologically. It does not preoccupy itself with the ‘historical evidence’ provided by the narratives, but merely tries to examine the historical settings in which the various stages of the narratives developed. Yet, the spread of Ismā‘ilism in Pamir, as a historical phenomenon, is generally approached in chapters 1 and 2 from a historico-ethnographic perspective, on the bases of very restricted historical evidence, ethnographic accounts and their comparison with indigenous conversion narratives.

The rest of the study is based on a textual analysis of Mubārak’s poetry in the light of Islamic mystical discourse in which hermeneutics is used as a tool for understanding Mubārak’s philosophy, a combination of the Ismā‘ilī esotericism and Sufi mysticism. His ‘Sufisised’ Ismā‘ilism is a unique personal spiritual experience that went far beyond the actual traditional forms of religious practices of his time and place, but was still regarded, traditionally, as the ‘true’ practice of the faith. As a religious phenomenon, however, Mubārak’s philosophy cannot be

reduced to merely personal boundaries as it was the manifestation of the commonly held faith: the *Panj-Tanī*. It is, therefore, essential to interpret the linguistic and symbolic expressions in Mubārak's works and their esoteric aspects in order to understand the core principles of Pamiri Ismā'īlism, to make a distinction between its popular and intellectual dimensions, and to perceive both as the inner experience of a living tradition of the Pamiris.

An important point, which one has to take into consideration when dealing with Mubārak's poetry, is the use of the Persian language in the local Badakhshani context and its influence by the local Pamiri languages. Although Mubārak was undoubtedly well grounded in Persian, there are at least three reasons why one should exercise caution while reading his poetry. Firstly, his Persian was Tajik, a language of the Eastern Iranian ethnic groups of Transoxiana, where historically the Persian language was born and to some extent remained 'classical' afterwards. In addition, during the course of history, though the official and literary language, it was significantly influenced by the Turkish languages (especially Uzbek), as Turkic nomad tribes have existed in the majority of Transoxiana and entire Central Asia since pre-historic times. It, therefore, stands to reason that the Tajik language, its vocabulary, grammar, morphology and phonetics developed in a slightly different way to that of modern Persian (Iranian), and these differences do occur in Mubārak's poetry.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, the process of the development of Persian literature itself was accompanied by "regional peculiarities and characteristic distinctions" that led to the formation of different poetic styles (s. *sabk*), such as *Khurāsānī*, *Irāqī*, *Hindī*, etc.<sup>32</sup> It is argued in the present study's sub-section entitled 'Poet' that Mubārak's style tends to be in line with the *sabk-i Hindī*. Secondly, Mubārak's native dialect had an oblique influence on his poetry. There are very few words and expressions of this nature that are observed in his works and explained throughout this work. Although Mubārak lived in Wakhān, where the Wakhī (or in local usage *khik*) language, belonging to the Pamiri group of languages, is spoken by the majority of the population, one cannot detect any vocabulary relating to this language in his poetry so far.<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, there are some verses in Mubārak's

works that do not exactly follow the metric prosody (*vazn*) and rhyme pattern (*qāfiya*) of the classic Persian poetry. Yet the conveyed messages in his poetry does not suffer in any way, whether he deliberately neglects the general poetic rule (as in the case of the latter poets of the ‘white poetry’, *shīr-i safīd*) or lacks its deployment. Mubārak makes a professional use of the Arabic language. He wrote several commentaries on the Qur’ān and the Prophet Muhammad’s *aḥādīth* and translated them (in a form of prose) into Tajik. His *Tafsīr-i Āyāt-i Kalām*, *Tarjamat al-Bayān*, *Mujādila-yi Iblīs va Ādam* and *Pand-Nāma-yi Risālat* are the best examples of this. Similarly, several Qur’ānic and *ḥadīth* expressions are used in his poetry to create a balance between the applied meaning and the conveyed message.

Translating Mubārak-i Wakhānī’s poetry from Persian into English was probably one of the hardest parts of my research work. To reflect the intensely mystical dimension of his poetry, in which the Sufi and Ismā‘ilī vocabulary and technical terminology are jointly involved, one needs to go far beyond a simple literal translation. Likewise, Persian poetics, which is briefly discussed in chapter 2, has its peculiarities which are delicate to transpose into other languages. For instance, in Mubārak’s poetry, synonyms are frequently repeated. And these repetitions may significantly contribute to the metric prosody (*vazn*) and rhyme (*qāfiya*) of the Persian poetry, but do not always make sense in English translation. In some cases, therefore, my personal interpretations are provided. These interpretations are based on my knowledge of the content (including language) and the context (historical, social and cultural) of the Persian-Tajik poetic tradition. Although the translation of Mubarak’s poetry tends to be a challenge and only possible with partial semantic and stylistic loss, this study tries to provide as accurate and meaningful an English translation of his poetry as is possible using both (where it is appropriate and necessary) the literal and literary methods of poetic interpretations. This study seeks to suspend any kind of value judgement, either apologetic or polemic, based on one’s personal ambition regarding the subject of study.

## ENDNOTES

1. For socio-economic and political history of Wakhān, see Bahadur Iskandarov, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie i politicheskie aspekty istorii Pamir-skix Knyazhestv: xv -pervaya polovina xix veka* (Dushanbe: Dānish, 1983).
2. For the study of Islam in the USSR, see Edmund Bosworth, “The Study of Islam in Russia and the Former Soviet Union: An Overview” in *Mapping Islamic Studies: Genealogy, Continuity and Change*, ed. A. Nanji, 96–107 (London, 1997).
3. Surkhafṣar is one of the co-authors of the famous Badakhshani historico-hagiographic narrative *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān* (History of Badakhshan). The main author of the book is Sang Muḥammad Badakhshī. For a detailed examination of him and his work, see Sang Muḥammad Badakhshī and Fazl’alī Bek Surkhafṣar, *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān (Istoriya Badakhshana)*, ed. and trans. Boldirev Aleksandr (Moscow: Vostochnaya Literature, 1990).
4. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this book are my own.
5. Andrei Bertels, “Nakhodki rukopisey na Pamire” *Narodi Azii i Afriki*, no. 2 (1961): 234–238.
6. Andrei Bertels, “The Ismā‘īlīs of Badakhshan: Literature”. In Audio Cassette, no. 9/1984 recorded on 12.06.1984 at the IIS. The cassette is preserved at the IIS’s library in London.
7. For Abibov’s account of Mubārak, see Amirbek Abibov, *Az Tārīkh-i Adabiyyāt-i Tājik dar Badakhshān* (Dushanbe: Dānish, 1971), 52–77. Amirbek Abibov, *Ganj-i Badakhshān* (Dushanbe: Irfān, 1972), 272–280.
8. The majority of the population of Murghāb (Kyrgyz) and Darvāz (Tajik) are Sunnis.
9. In modern times, the cultural diversity within the Nizārī Ismā‘īlī community is represented by the *Khwājas* (originated in India, but now firmly established in Western Europe, North America and North Africa), the *Panj-Tanīs* (the Fivers), including mostly the Tajiks, Afghans and several small ethnic groups in the Northern Areas of Pakistan), the Iranians and the Arab Ismā‘īlīs (mostly in Syria and Yemen).
10. The Fāṭimids were the first Ismā‘īlī dynasty that established their political authority in North Africa and parts of the Middle East during the Abbasid caliphate. The history of the Ismā‘īlīs or ‘the rightly guided summons’ (*al da‘wa al-hādiya*), as they called themselves at the beginning, starts

in the second century of Islam (7th AC) with succession crises over the death of the fifth (according to the Ismā‘ilīs) and sixth (according to the Twelver Shī‘is) Shī‘ī Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d.765). As a result of this schism, several groups developed within the Shī‘ī Islam, including the Ismā‘ilīs—the partisans of al-Ṣādiq’s eldest son, Ismā‘il. During the long and complicated course of their history, the Ismā‘ilīs managed to establish themselves not only as an organised religious community, but also as a strong political power, such as the Fātimids in Egypt and the Nizarīs in Iran. From the fall of the Alamūt (13th AC) strongholds until the new Ismā‘ilī revival in Anjudān, Iran (15th AC), there was a period of anxiety and sorrow for the Ismā‘ilīs, during which they were persecuted as heretics. Consequently, it was a time of concealment (*satr*) when the Ismā‘ilīs had to conceal their real identity (the so-called method of *taqiyya*) under the umbrellas of Sufism, the Twelver Shī‘ism and even Sunnism. In modern times, under the leadership of the Aga Khans, especially the last two (Aga Khan III, d.1957 and the current Ismā‘ili Imam, Aga Khan IV), the Ismā‘ilī community firmly established itself in India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Syria, North Africa, Europe and North America. The socio-economic and cultural branch of the Ismā‘ilī Imamate—the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)—is a powerful NGO, aiming to improve the quality of life in the developing countries. For a detailed account of the Ismā‘ilī history and doctrines, refer to Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā‘ilīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

11. To date, one of the best examples of Sufi poetic influence on the Ismā‘ilī tradition of the post-Alamut period is Nizārī Quhistānī (d.1321). For a detail examination of him, see Nadia Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols: Quhistānī and the Continuity of Ismā‘ilī Tradition in Persia* (London: Tauris, IIS, 2002). Leonard Lewishon, “Sufism and Ismā‘ilī Doctrine in the Persian Poetry of Nizārī Quhistānī (645–721/1247–1321)” *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 12 (2003): 229–251.
12. Rūmī is very popular in Badakhshan under the name of his spiritual guide, Shams-i Tabrīzī, to whom he dedicated almost all his works. His lyrics, like those of ‘Aṭṭār, Sanā‘ī, Ḥāfiẓ and many other Sufi mystics constitute the main body of the local sacred songs, referred to as the *madō* or *qaṣā’id* (plural of *qaṣīda*). For a comprehensive study on Pamiri poetic and musical tradition, see G. Van Den Berg, “Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study of the Songs and Poems of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan” (PhD thesis, State University of Leiden, 1997).

13. It is necessary to mention that the first historic *dīdār* of the Ismā‘īlī Imam, with his followers in Pamir, occurred after almost a thousand years of the Pamiris’ conversion to Islam. In May 1995, the present Imam Aga Khan IV visited Tajikistan and gave *dīdār* in several districts of Pamir. This visit was an important historical occasion in the lives of the Pamiris, both in the spiritual and political senses, for it occurred during the Tajik civil war (1992–1997) in which the Pamiris, as one of the main victims, were suffering from socio-economic and political problems. The twenty fourth of May, the date on which the first *dīdār* occurred, is now widely celebrated as ‘the day of light’ (*rūz-i nūr*) all over VMKB and other parts of Tajikistan where the Ismā‘īlīs live.
14. Wladimir Ivanow, “An Ismaili Interpretation of the Gulshani Raz” *JBBRAC* 8 (1932): 67–68.
15. For Badakhshani dialect, see Anna Rozenfeld, *Badakhshanskie Govory Tadzhikskogo Yazika* (Leningrad: Leningradskiy Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1971).
16. Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Dīvān*, ed. Naṣr Allāh Taqavī (Tehran, 1961), 5, 190–191, 205, 272–273, 297, 298, 299, 331, 387, 429, 456, 467, 469 and 489.
17. Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Jāmi’ al-Hikmatayn*, ed. Henry Corbin and Muhammad Mu’mīn (Tehran: Institu-i Iran va Faransah, 1953), 15, 17, 314, 316.
18. There are still two main religious clans in Pamir: (1) *sayyids*, those whose genealogical line claims to have originated from the Prophet Muhammad and ‘Alī; and (2) *khujas*, who claim to belong to the family of Sūhrāb-i Valī, who is believed to have been appointed by Nāṣir-i Khusraw as his rightful spiritual successor. To date, historically, Sūhrāb-i Valī was born four centuries after Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s death. For more details on him, refer to Farhad Daftary, “Badakhshānī Sayyid Sūhrāb-i Valī”, in *Dā’irat al-Ma’ārif-i Buzurg-i Islāmī*, edited by Musavi K. Bojnurdi (Tehran: The Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, 1996), 1131.
19. According to the Islamic ‘science of letters’ (*ilm al-abjad*), the following letters correspond to the following numbers: *ghayn* – 1000, *rā* – 200, *min* – 40, *wāw* – 6 which makes it 1246 (1860). For further details on *abjad* calculations see Lalah Bakhtiar, *Sufi: Expression of the Mystic Quest* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 114.
20. There is another copy of the *Gawhar-Rīz* (preserved in the library of the IIS), whose date of completion (1244/1828) differs from that of our version. The content of both copies are almost the same, apart from the fact that the former lacks some concluding pages.

21. For more details on Muhammad-Shāhīs, see Vladimir Ivanow, “The Forgotten Branch of Ismā‘ilism” *JRAS* (1938): 57–79.
22. It is believed that, in the early Ismā‘ilī doctrine of Imamate, there are two types of Imams: *mustawda‘* and *mustaqarr*. The *mustawda‘* Imam is the one in whose genealogical line the Imamate does not continue. It is when there is no male successor or when an Imam is succeeded by his brother. For instance, in the case of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, the former is regarded as a *mustawda‘* Imam. The *mustaqarr* Imam is the one in whose line the Imamate continues through his sons or grandsons (in the case of the current Imam, the Aga Khan IV who succeeded his grandfather Sir Sultān Muhammad Shah in 1957).
23. Rahim Rahmanqulov, ed. *Bahr al-Akhbār: Silsila-yi Hikāyāthā dā’ir ba Hayāt-i Nāṣir-i Khusraw va Sayāhati u dar Badakhshān* (Khorog: Pamir, 1992), 4–5.
24. Sang Muḥammad Badakhshī and Fazl’alī Bek Surkhafṣar, *Tārīkh-i Badakhs-hān (Istoriya Badakhshana)*, ed. Andrei Boldirev (Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura, 1997).
25. Ākhun Sulaymān and Sayyid Futur-Shāh, *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān (Istoriya Badakhshana)*, ed. Bahadur Iskandarov (Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura, 1973).
26. For a review, commentary and translation of the *Umm al-Kitāb*, see Vladimir Ivanow, ed. *Umm al-Kitāb* (Berlin and Leipzig: Fyzi, 1936).
27. John Wood, *A Journey to the Source of the River Oxus* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1976). Ole Olufsen, *Through the Unknown Pamirs: The Second Danish Pamir Expedition 1898–1899* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969).
28. Olufsen, 156.
29. Marc Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central Asia: Brief Narrative of the Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and Northwest China* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 268.
30. The list of these authors’ works is shown in the bibliography.
31. For Tajik grammar and phonetics, see Ustinov., S Grammatik-i Zabān-i Adabī-yi Hāzira-yi Tājik (Dushanbe: Dānish, 1985). Khaskashov, T., *Fonetika-i Zabān-i Adabī-yi Tājik* (Dushanbe: Irfān, 1989).
32. Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), 112–114.
33. For a detailed account on Wakhī language, see Alexandr Gryunberg and Ivan Steblin-Kamenskiy, *Vakhanskiy Yazik: Text, Slovar, Grammatichsekiy Ocherk* (Moscow: Glavnaya Redaksiya Vostochnoy Literaturi, 1976). Ivan Steblin-Kamenskiy, *Etimologichskiy Slovar Vakhanskogo Yazika* (St.Peterburg: St. Peterburgskiy Gosudarstvenniy Universitet, 1999).

## CHAPTER 1

# ISMĀ‘ILĪ TRADITION IN PAMIR: LEGENDS AND HISTORY

### 1.1. THE SPREAD OF THE ISMĀ‘ILĪ MISSION IN PAMIR AND BADAKHSHAN

It is generally agreed among the scholars of Islamic history that Islamisation was not an overnight campaign imposed by the swords of the seventh-century Arab soldiers, but a long process of shifting values and identities to which traders, Muslim rulers and preachers (especially Sufis) of various Islamic backgrounds made significant contributions. In the context of Central Asia, especially Badakhshan and the Pamir principalities, conversion to Islam was mainly due to the missionary activities of the latter. According to Levzion, the first preachers of Islam in Transoxiana after the Arab conquest were the heterodox sects, such as the Ismā‘ilīs, who “propagated their creeds without the support of the state, and in this respect, as well as working among the urban lower classes and rural and tribal societies, they preceded the Sufis”.<sup>1</sup> It

may still be objected, however, that some of the Ismā'īlī-Qarmatī *dā'īs* (missionaries), despite their failure, did gain support either from the local or central governments, as well as being patronised by certain foreign powers, such as the Fātimids of Egypt and the Qarmatīs. For instance, it is evident from some non-Ismā'īlī sources, such as Ibn al-Nadīm (d.995), Al-Tha'ālibī (d.1038) and Nizām al-Mulk (d.1092), that, during the reign of the Sāmānīds (872–999), especially at the time of *amir* (king) Naṣr b. Ahmad Sāmānī (914–943), an Ismā'īlī (Qarmatī) network of the *da'wa* (mission), led by Muḥammad b. Ahmad al-Nasafī (or Nabshakhī, d.943), was very active in Transoxiana, especially in Bukhārā and Samarqand.<sup>2</sup> It succeeded in the religious persuasion of many political and intellectual figures of the Sāmānid court, including the *amir* himself, the *vezir* (chief minister) Balamī, the pioneer (*sar-dafdar*) of Tajik-Persian literature, Abdullāh-i Rūdakī, and others. In Khurāsān and Transoxiana, the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* was a process of individual conversion (mainly of rulers and intellectuals) restricted to certain political goals. The *da'īs*, after all, were not only the Ismā'īlī preachers, but also the agents of the Fātimid and the Qarmatī states. On the other hand, the political situation in the Sāmānid court itself was gradually being destabilised by the increasing influence of the Turkish guards, which, through the support of the Sunni '*ulamā'*, consequently led to the defeat of al-Nasafī's mission.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the spread of Ismā'īlism in Transoxiana gradually decreased after al-Nasafī's mission. This decline was mainly a result of the political cataclysms of the post-Sāmānid period, when the Turkic dynasties of the Ghaznavids (962–1186) and the Qarakhanids (later the Seljukids) took over Central Asia and began their *jihād* against 'heresy' (i.e., Ismā'īlism).<sup>4</sup> This can be seen as a key factor in the inevitable relocation of Ismā'īlī *da'wa* from Transoxiana's sedentary zones to its isolated mountain areas, such as the Pamirs, where it was strongly connected with the name of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, a Persian-speaking poet and philosopher, whose mission was, if not on the direct orders, certainly the inevitable consequence of his interaction with the Fātimid state.

Before progressing to a detailed examination of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's mission in Pamir, known as the *Da'wat-i Nāṣir*, it is necessary to have

a brief look at the pre-Da‘wat’s religious life of the region. To date, Islamisation is a complicated issue, not only in the context of Badakhshan, but in Central Asia as a whole.<sup>5</sup> This complication is due to the lack of contemporary local sources on the subject. Although, since the ninth century, there have been some individual cases of historical writings (such as Narshakhī’s *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*), in Bukhārā, Samarcand and other sedentary zones of Central Asia, it is obvious that these cannot present a coherent and accurate picture of the process of Islamisation, which was still underway. On the other hand, the local historiography developed long after (from the sixteenth century<sup>6</sup>) Islam established itself in the region as the dominant religion. In Badakhshan and the Pamir principalities, this process was far slower (from the nineteenth century) than the rest of Central Asia.

There are some earlier Muslim sources, which refer briefly to the religious life of the Pamir principalities before Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s mission. For instance, an early Muslim author, Istakhri (d.993), describes the people of Wakhān and Shughnān as ‘infidels’ (*kāfirān*).<sup>7</sup> The fact that Islam did not become a widespread religion in the mountain areas until the tenth century, especially in Wakhān, is clearly expressed in a medieval Muslim geographical chronicle (982) *Hudūd al-‘Ālam* (The Regions of the World):

The town of Sikāshim [modern Ishkāshim on both the Tajik and Afghan sides] is the capital of the region of Wakhān (*qaṣabi-yi nāhiyyat-i Wakhān*). Its inhabitants are the fire-worshipers (*gab-rakān*) and the Muslims, and the ruler (*malik*) of Wakhān lives there. Khamdud [Khandut in modern Afghan Wakhān] is where the idol temples of the Wakhīs (*butkhāna-yi Wakhān*) are located.<sup>8</sup>

These ideas are strongly supported in the indigenous oral and written tradition, as well as in the pre-Islamic architectural and monumental heritage of Pamir. Before turning to the local oral and written tradition, it should be noted that, although the pre-Islamic castles and temples of the region are not preserved intact, they tend to be the only remarkable forms of architecture in that region at that period; there is no analogy

of them in the Islamic period. For instance, in the Khandut village of the Wakhān province of modern Afghanistan, there is a ruined temple, which some authors attribute to the Buddhist tradition.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, there are several half-ruined castles that belonged to the local pre-Islamic rulers in both Tajik and Afghan Wakhān. The most famous is called ‘The King’s Castle’ (*qal'a-yi Qah-Qaha*) in Namadgut, the capital of Qah-Qaha.<sup>10</sup> The other castles are also named after their owners (who are believed to have been Qah-Qaha’s brothers or relatives), namely Zamr ‘the fire worshiper’ (*ātash-parast*) in Yamchun, Zangibār in Hisār and Sapikh-Chūpān in Afghan Wakhān. According to the Soviet archaeologists, these castles were built in the fifth and sixth centuries AC.<sup>11</sup>

The local tradition is dominated by a famous story about the Prophet Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law, ‘Alī’s, campaign to Wakhān and his battle against Qah-Qaha, who is described as ‘the black-clad infidel’ (*kāfir-i siyāh-pūsh*).<sup>12</sup> To date, this story is famous not only in Wakhān, but also in the entire Pamir districts. The main point of the story is that prior to the spread of Islam, the population of Wakhān were ‘unbelievers’ (*kāfirān*) who were converted to Islam by ‘Alī and his sons, Hasan and Husayn, who won the battle against *Qah-Qaha*.<sup>13</sup> Although there is an imaginary shrine to ‘Alī (*Mazār-i Shāh-i Mardān*) and the ruins of Qah-Qaha’s castle in the Namadgut village of the Ishkashim district, the story does not fit within the chronology of the historical developments of Islam in the region. There is no revealing historical evidence about ‘Alī’s journey to Wakhān or even Central Asia. The incontrovertible historical fact is that during the reign of ‘Alī (655–661) and the lifetimes of his sons, Hasan (d.669) and Husayn (d.680), Central Asia remained unconquered by the Arab troops.

Concerning the religious beliefs and practices of the pre-Islamic Wakhī kings, it is claimed that they were *gabrakān*, who worshiped fire, wore black and married their own sisters and daughters. It is true that some similar elements of Zoroastrianism, such as the veneration of fire and incestuous marriages, are believed to be the case in pre-Islamic Wakhān and the entire Pamir region. The lack of historical evidence, nevertheless, does not allow us to conclude whether or not these kings

were actually Zoroastrians, since these elements were not unique in Zoroastrianism, but common forms of religious expression in the diverse frame of the pre-Islamic religious beliefs and practices of Pamir and Central Asia as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

The other story that deals with the early period concerns Imam ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn’s (d.714) refuge in Pamir. It is believed that, after the events of *Karbalā* (680), when Imam Ḥusayn was martyred by the troops of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya, his only descendant to the Imamate, ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, miraculously escaped to Pamir and spent the rest of his life in a village called Tim (close to Khorog), where, until the present day, his imaginary shrine is preserved.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, there are several other mythical stories in the local oral tradition narrated in the same scheme to deal with other key Islamic figures of Shī‘ī importance, who are believed to have visited the region and performed miracles, such as Fāṭīma bint Muhammad (d.632) and one of the Fāṭimid Imam-caliphs, al-Mustanṣir Billāh.<sup>16</sup> Although, from historical point of view, all these stories are spurious, one cannot underestimate their doctrinal importance in the study of the indigenous Ismā‘īlī tradition in Pamir and its evolvement during the course of history. In Pamir, where the gap between the oral and written traditions was not filled until the nineteenth and early twentieth century, oral materials are considerably important in understanding and interpretation of the events of the past. What is particularly helpful about the oral stories is that they presumably had to happen in and be elaborated by the community, which was creating its religious identity. That is, it is a history of the community not necessarily how it happened, but how the people believe it happened. For the scholars of Pamiri studies, however, it depends on the way in which they employ oral material when creating history from stories.

Returning to Nāṣir’s mission in Badakhshan and Pamir, it should be noted that although the fact of his arrival and later death in the region is generally supported by some convincing evidence, there is no specific historical document dealing with his missionary activities. It is known that Nāṣir-i Khusraw, after the seven years (1047–1052) of his Middle Eastern journey, well described in his famous *Safarnāma* (Travelogue)<sup>17</sup>,

returned to Balkh as the *dā'i* or the *ḥujjat* (lit. Proof of Imam) of the Khurāsān *jazīra* (oasis).<sup>18</sup> While travelling in Cairo, the capital-city of the Fātimid state, he met with the Ismā'īlī *dā'i al-du'āt* (the chief missionary), al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shīrāzī (d.1078), and participated in his religious sessions called *al-majālis al-Mu'ayyidiyah*.<sup>19</sup> He was greatly inspired by the Ismā'īlī ideas and, upon his return, tried to propagate them in his own town, when the geopolitical situation of the time was not in his favour. As a predominantly Sunni region, Khurāsān was under the control of the Saljuq dynasty, which was one of the key political and religious opponents of the Shī'ī Ismā'īlīs in the East. Their anti-Ismā'īlī campaign, supported by the 'ulamā' and intensified under Niẓām al-Mulk (the chief minister from 1063), made many Ismā'īlīs leave their homes in order to seek refuge in safe places. Those who could not make it were persecuted and their land confiscated.<sup>20</sup> Nāṣir, therefore, had to leave Balkh for Badakhshan, where he is believed to have been invited by local ruler 'Alī b. Asad.<sup>21</sup> At any rate, according to his *Dīvān* in 1064 Nāṣir was already in Yumgān to face the reality of his new life, which he would later condemn and praise in his poetry.<sup>22</sup> It is true that the destabilised political situation of Balkh was one of the main reasons for his migration to Badakhshan. As Nāṣir-i Khusraw himself clearly testifies: "when the disgraced (*mal'un*) captured my home, I could not find a better cave than Yumgān".<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, the question that arises here is whether his mission to Badakhshan was directly ordered by the Fātimid network of the *da'wa* (as the oral tradition claims) or whether it was a matter of personal security. One may assume that the former argument could be a pretext for the latter, because, being well trained by the Ismā'īlīs *dā'i*, the *ḥujjat* of Khurāsān, he had to promote their policy there and in the neighbouring regions of Transoxiana. Yet it seems that Nāṣir's choice of the remote mountain areas of Pamir as the epicentre of his propaganda had less to do with the Fātimid instructions than with the geopolitical situation of the time, which left the Ismā'īlīs with no option but to seek asylum in geographically suitable places like Pamir. This is not to say, of course, that the actual process of his mission to Pamir suffered in any way from the essentially involuntary nature of the motive

for his migration; for there was a strong sense of belief in the ideology professed by him, which consequently brought enormous success to the Ismā‘īlī mission in the region.

The historic gap between the facts of his arrival and death is, therefore, filled with a huge quantity of elaborated oral and written anecdotes and legends of local importance. The indigenous tradition describing Nāṣir’s refuge as a significant religious mission approaches this issue, of course, from a sectarian apologetic perspective, where an attempt is made to create and then justify a new Pamiri Ismā‘īlī religious identity. Now, while the issue of the historicity of the *da‘wa* remains disputable, we have to analyse how the community elaborated its own history; not necessarily how it happened in reality, but how it was believed to have happened.

According to the aforementioned *Gawhar-Rīz*, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, as the *ḥujjat* of Khurāsān or sometimes referred to as the *Pīr-i Kuhistān* (in the sense of the Pamir Mountains) came to Badakhshan together with Imam al-Mustansir.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the Imam died in the *Māh-i May* village of the modern Darvāz district in Afghan Badakhshan.<sup>25</sup> The imaginary shrine to him, which is preserved in this village, is one of the most sacred places in the whole of Badakhshan, and is equally venerated by the Ismā‘īlīs and the Sunnis alike.

Further, the narrative elaborates on Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s miraculous conversion activities in the various parts of Badakhshan. An interesting point about the story is that it mainly emphasises personal rather than community conversion. The first converts, therefore, seem to be the local rulers and intellectuals, who later became the main agents of the *da‘wa*. The narrative presents the *da‘wa* as a well-organised network, in which all of the members had their clear functions appointed by Nāṣir-i Khusraw. For instance, the so-called ruler of Yumgān Malik Jahān-Shāh (renamed Bābā ‘Umar-i Yumgī after his conversion) and Sayyid Sūhrāb-i Valī (sometimes referred to as Sayyid Alavī) are regarded as the religious guides of the community. The story also legitimises the future religious authority of their families, especially those of Sūhrāb-i Valī, the *khūjas*, who continue to benefit from this claim to the present day. The next

member of the *da‘wa* was called Shāh Madanī, the head (*sardār*) of the Pīr’s army (*lashkar*). This very controversial position seems to refer to an idea of ‘forced conversion’, which disagrees with the nature of Nāṣiri Khusraw’s teaching. However, the story does not provide any further explanations about this. The last three positions in the network are the heads of the *abdālān* (substitutes), *qalandarān* (dervishes) and *dam-dārān* (the ones with miraculous ‘breath’). This clearly indicates that the story was elaborated in the post-Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s period, sometimes during the Ismā‘İLİ-Sufi interactions. The first two positions, which originate from the Sufi hierarchy of sainthood (*wilāyat*), were occupied by individuals called Shāh Mahdas and Ahmad-i Dīvāna.<sup>26</sup> The position of *dam-dārān*, which is held by Bābā Faq’, is connected to local perceptions about the ‘extraordinary’ power, which some saints are believed to possess when, for example, treating sick people.

Ironically, the narrative does not mention the name of ‘Alī b. Asad, who is praised in Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s poetry. Instead of him, as an Ismā‘İLİ ruler of Yumgān, the tradition names Malik Jahān-Shāh, the son of Gev Kaykāvus-i Ghīlānī, who, it claims, was a non-Muslim ruler of the same place (and accordingly, the same time). The name of the latter indicates the pre-Islamic Sāsānid tradition of referring to kings. Although this argument contradicts Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s account of ‘Alī b. Asad, it coincidentally tries to emphasise the historic fact that Islam did not become a widespread religion in the region until the eleventh century. Among the personalities named in the narrative, only Sūhrāb-i Valī tends to be a historic figure, but there is a huge historic gap between his lifetime and Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s mission.<sup>27</sup> According to Ivanow, he lived in the fifteenth century, and his famous work *Sahīfatu ’un-Nāzirīn* or *Si va Shish Sahifa* (Thirty-Six Pages), which was written in 1453, “has nothing to do with Nāṣir-i Khusraw and does not even belong to his school, but coincides with the Alamūt tradition”.<sup>28</sup>

The other crucial point in the religious life of Pamir is the relationship between the *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* and even the founder himself and the new changes in Ismā‘İLİ policy (Alamūt state) and doctrine (*da‘wat-i jadīd*)

developed by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, commonly referred in the Ismā‘īlī circle as Bābā Sayyidānā (d.1124), in Iran.<sup>29</sup> It is claimed by the tradition that on his way home, from Cairo to Balkh, Nāṣir met Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and was recognised by him as a teacher.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, there is an attempt in the first version of the *Gawhar-Rīz* to link Nāṣir-i Khusraw to the Nizārī tradition by declaring him the *ḥujjat* of Imam Hadī (Nizār’s son) in Kuhistān (Badakhshan), and Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as the *ḥujjat* of Daylamān. It is true that, in 1052, Nāṣir-i Khusraw returned to Balkh as the *ḥujjat* of Khurāsān to lead and propagate the Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlī mission in the region. However, it is difficult to establish the relationship between the two men and their influence on each other as well as the impact of that influence on the *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* in Pamir. Historically, Nāṣir-i Khusraw died in 1080, ten years before the Alamūt state was formally established in 1090, and fourteen years before the Nizārī-Musta‘lī schism occurred in 1094.<sup>31</sup> It, therefore, stands to reason that in the early Alamūt period Ismā‘īlī tradition in Pamir and Badakhshan remained pro-Fāṭimid in the sense of Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s teachings and preachings. Although it is hard to speculate to what extent and how exactly Nāṣir-i Khusraw introduced the Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlī doctrine to the diverse religious communities of the mountainous Badakhshan, his initial ideas were based on the Fāṭimid tradition of learning and teaching; for it was the Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlism that inspired him to change his religious conviction and personal lifestyle. Nāṣir, thus, while propagating the Fāṭimid *da‘wat*, was trying to contextualise its doctrine in accordance with the immediate environment of the region; that is, to implant his teachings in the culturally diverse frame of the indigenous religious tradition.

We lack historical evidence about the later relationships between the followers of the *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* and the Nizārīs of Alamūt, however, certain elements of the indigenous religious tradition indicate that it was strongly influenced by the Nizārī doctrines of the late Alamūt period (thirteenth century AD). An example of this influence can be seen in the wide diffusion of the literature of that time in Pamir, among which the most popular are Nāṣir al-Dīn Tūsī’s *Rawda-yi Taslīm* (the Paradise

of Submission), Abu Ishāq's *Haft Bāb* (Seven Chapters) *Kalām-i Pīr* (the Word of Pīr) attributed to Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Matlūb al-Mū'min* (the Faithful Believers's Sought) ascribed to Tūsī and many others.<sup>32</sup> Hence, despite the historical obscurity, the Ismā‘ilīs of the *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* were not completely cut off from the new forms of Ismā‘ilī political and doctrinal thought and practice represented by the Nizārīs of Iran.

## 1.2. THE FORMATION OF THE INDIGENOUS FAITH OF “THE FIVERS”: *PANJ-TANĪ*

In practical terms the *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* was renewed and developed during the course of history by various Ismā‘ilī (and sometimes non-Ismā‘ilī) *dā‘ī* travellers, most of whom were displaced as a result of Alamūt's collapse (1256). Their trips, like that of the founder of the *Da‘wat*, were probably motivated by the political situation of the time. The Mongol invasion of the Islamic world in the thirteenth century and the abolishment of the Alamūt strongholds were followed by the persecution of the Ismā‘ilīs throughout the Middle East and Transoxiana. In Ismā‘ilī history, this period is called *dawr al-satr* (the concealment period), which continued until the eighteenth century. Consequently, many Ismā‘ilī *dā‘īs* had to seek political refuge in places far out of reach of the Mongols and their local governors of native origins. It is believed that, after this case, three Iranian *dā‘ī* brothers, Shāh Khāmūsh, Shāh Malang and Shāh Kāshān, took refuge in Shughnān. At some point during this period, two other saints, Shāh Qambar and Shāh Isām al-Dīn, came to Wakhān. Thus, while religious causes were undoubtedly one of the motivating factors in these *dā‘īs*' visit to the region, one cannot dismiss the significance of the political reasons involved in their flight to Pamir. As one of the pioneers of Pamiri studies, Bobrinskiy comments:

All those categories of people, who were oppressed by an evil fate, despot or conqueror, had to seek asylum in the mountains through the unequal struggle. All those displeased with either the new or old style of life, all the guilty and guiltless were pursued to leave their homeland for good.<sup>33</sup>

Very few local histories refer to the visits of these new missionaries to Badakhshan and Pamir principalities, such as the aforementioned *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*. Although, for our purpose, this book does not provide much evidence, there are still some references to the religious developments in the region. For instance, it claims that the aforementioned Shāh Khāmūsh (i.e., ‘the silent king’), referred to as Mīr Ḥasan Shāh, who is believed to belong to the family of the Prophet through Imam Husain and was an *uvaysī* saint (*walī*)<sup>34</sup> from his mother’s line, migrated from Isfahān to Shughnān in the fifth (eleventh) century, and that he was the ancestor of Shughān’s *pīrs* and *mīrs*.<sup>35</sup> This claim was partially confirmed by one of the well-known Shughnī *pīrs* of the last century, Sayyid Yusuf ‘Alī Shāh, whose family tree can be traced back to Shāh Khāmūsh’s brother, Shāh Malang, in his interview with Bobrinskiy in 1902.<sup>36</sup> However, twenty-six years later (1928), in an interview with another Russian scholar, Stanishevskiy, the *pīr* claimed that there was a mistake in Bobrinsky’s reference and that Shāh Khāmūsh was the ancestor of the Pamiri *mīrs* but not the *pīrs*.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, there is another version of the story narrated in a local Pamiri chronicle called *Sarā-yi Dilrabāh* (Attractive Mansion), where the approximate time of the dervishes’ migration is shown to be the late sixteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Although there can be no doubt that this story, as mentioned before, lacks historical authenticity, especially data, its chronology appears more feasible than that of the previous story. Firstly, there is no reliable historical evidence proving that, prior to Nāṣir-i Khusraw, any Ismā'īlī *dā'īs* had visited the region. Secondly, the mass migration of the Ismā'īlī *dā'īs* to safe places, like Pamir, commenced after the defeat of the Alamūt strongholds in the late thirteenth century. Thirdly, if Shāh Malang is the ancestor of some Shughnī *pīrs*, as the first story claims, then he definitely came to Pamir after Nāṣir-i Khusraw. This is because all the Sufi terms, such as *pīr* (master) and *murīd* (disciple), were not added to the Ismā'īlī vocabulary until the post-Alamūt period.

One of the main problems with these *dā'īs* appears to be their religious (or rather sectarian) identities, which consequently had complicated the religious beliefs and practices of the Pamiris. Presumably all

those traveller-*dā'īs* represented some kind of Shī'ī ideas, but it is hard to speculate about their exact religious affiliations, which certainly had their impact on the formation of the indigenous beliefs and practices. From the historical point of view, in the post-Alamūt period, the Nizārī Ismā'īlism was divided into the Qāsim-Shāhī and the Muhammad-Shāhī branches.<sup>39</sup> Although the Muhammad-Shāhī Imams failed to survive until the present time, in political terms, they seemed to be more advanced than the Qāsim-Shāhīs. It is believed that the Pamiri Ismā'īlīs belonged to the Muhammad-Shāhī branch until its extinction in the eighteenth century. Even one of the Muhammad-Shāhī Imams, Shāh Rādī al-Dīn, managed to visit Badakhshan and establish his political authority in the region for two years (1507–1509), until he was defeated by a local Timurid ruler, Mirzā Khān.<sup>40</sup> The later development of the Muhammad-Shāhī branch in the region remains obscure due to the lack of historical evidence. Yet there is an attempt in the *Gawhar-Rīz* to indicate the possible amalgamation of the Pamiri Muhammad-Shāhīs with the Qāsim-Shāhīs of the Aga Khan. It indicates the slow transformation of the region to the new branch of Ismā'īlism. From the information provided in the manuscript, it appears that the process of unification started at some point in the first half of the eighteenth century. For instance, there is a historically significant story in the manuscript concerning the visit of one of the local *pīrs*, Khwāja Ṣāliḥ, who, in genealogical terms, is presented as the eleventh descendant of Sūhrāb-i Valī, to the Imam's headquarters. It begins with a description of his visit in Sufi language, which is not unusual in the religious literature of post-Alamūt Ismā'īlism.

As the wine of divine unity (*may-i wahdat-i ilāhi*) was handed to Khwāja Muhammad Ṣāliḥ, he began to look for the sun-face of Mawlānā. After some quests, he finally reached the Sun [Imam] and drank a cup of wine of divine unity in his session (*majlis*), whose pure name was Mawlānā Shāh-i Dīn Ḥasan b. Mawlānā Sayyid 'Alī.<sup>41</sup>

Besides this mystic description, the story coincidentally brings up two important historic facts, which helps us to determine the approximate

time of Șāliḥ’s visit, and also allows us to assume which Imam he visited. Firstly, it asserts that Șāliḥ visited the Imam in Kabul and stayed there as an honoured guest until the coming of Nādir Shāh Afshār (GR. v.1, p. 66). Historically, Nādir invaded Afghanistan in 1737; in June, his troops occupied Ghaznī and moved to Kabul, whose *sarbadār* (military chief), Nāṣir Khān, was the vassal of the emperor of Delhi Muhammad Shāh.<sup>42</sup> Hence, if the story about Șāliḥ’s visit to Kabul is true, then one can assume that it took place sometimes in the late 1730s. Secondly, the story clearly indicates that the name of Imam, whom Șāliḥ had met, was Shāh-i Dīn Ḥasan b. Sayyid ‘Alī, a Qāsim-Shāhī Imam, whose Imamate period (approximately 1730s–1740s) matches the time of Șāliḥ’s visit. In addition, the manuscript describes Ḥasan ‘Alī as the *mustaqarr* Imam (an Imam in whose line the Imamate continues) itself indicating his acceptance by the Badakhshani Ismā‘īlī community. It should be pointed out that the manuscript does not present an accurate genealogical table (presented both in prose and poetry) of the Qāsim-Shāhī and the Muḥammad-Shāhī Imams, and several times confuses the name of the former Imams with the latter. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that, if Șāliḥ had a chance to meet an Ismā‘īlī Imam, then it definitely would have been the forty-second Qāsim-Shāhī Imam, Ḥasan ‘Alī, sometimes referred to as Ḥasan Beg, but not a Muḥammad-Shāhī Imam, since it is evident that the Muḥammad-Shāhī Imam of that time was Amir Muhammad Musharraf (d.1764). The Muḥammad-Shāhī Imams after Shāh Tāhir’s departure (1520) from Iran, which was caused by Ismā‘īl Safavī’s order of his execution, established their headquarters in various places in India (Ahmadnagar, Heyderabad and Deccan).<sup>43</sup>

It is said that Ḥasan ‘Alī moved his headquarters from Kahak to Shahr-i Bābak in the Kirmān province of southeastern Iran because of the unstable political situation of the post-Safavid period that made the pilgrimage of the Indian (*khwāja*) Ismā‘īlis difficult.<sup>44</sup> Geographically, this move seemed to be suitable for the Badakhshani Ismā‘īlis as well. Indeed, although Ḥasan ‘Alī’s presence in Kabul on the eve of Nādir’s invasion is obscure, including the exact date of his Imamate, one cannot dismiss the possibility that he or some of his *dā’is* visited Kabul

and received Şāliḥ. Politically, it was in the interests of the Qāsim-Shāhī Imams to establish their sphere of influence among the politically disconnected Ismā'īlī communities, such as those of Badakhshan.

The manuscript also demonstrates the integration of the local Badakhshani community (*jamā'at*) with the newly adopted Ismā'īlī branch via the legitimate orders or guidance instructions, *farāmin* (or *farmān*, the singular and most used form) of the Nizārī Imam, in whose induction to the newly appointed *pīrs* Şāliḥ is believed to have played a significant role. As it claims, Şāliḥ met a Qāsim-Shāhī *hujjat* named Mawlānā Ya'qūb, who gave him the Imam's *farmāns* to be followed by the Ismā'īlīs of Badakhshan. In the course of time, he brought some *farmāns* to the following *pīrs*; Khwāja Salmān, Khwāja Badal, Shāh Nawā (Zebāk's *pīr*) and others, who later enhanced and strengthened the local Badakhshani institution of the *pirship* (based on the authority of the local *pīrs*). This will be discussed further in chapter 2, but, for now, it suffices to note that *pirship*, as an authoritarian institution, was in control of religious as well as socio-economic aspects of life in Pamir. Thus, the time of Şāliḥ can be marked as a transitional period in the religious life of the Pamiri Ismā'īlīs from the Muḥammad-Shāhī to the Qāsim-Shāhī branch of Ismā'īlism. Although the specific reasons for this transition remain uncertain, it is possible to state that switching from one Ismā'īlī branch to another did not have any particular doctrinal importance because the main principle of the Ismā'īlī Imamat remained the same. This transition was probably influenced by the political conditions of these branches. In the final decades of their existence, the Muḥammad-Shāhīs faced persecution from the Mughul rulers of India (Awrangzīb), and gradually lost their political importance. After Amir Muhammād al-Bāqir, their line of Imamate came to an end for unknown reasons.<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, the Qāsim-Shāhī Imams gradually achieved great political importance in the time of Ḥasan 'Alī Shāh (1817–1881), who is referred to as Shāhi Dīn Ḥasan, 'the needed judge' (*qāḍī al-hājāt*) in the *Gawhar-Rīz*. He married Sarv-i Jahān, a daughter of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh Qājār (d.1834), and received from his father-in-law the honorary title 'Aga Khan'. Likewise, he was governor of Kirmān until his exile to India, where he was greatly

supported by the British rulers. This support was so enormous that it led certain people, especially the Russians, who were also involved in the expansionist policy in Central and Southern Asia, to accuse him and his successors of co-operation with the British intelligence services.<sup>46</sup>

In a doctrinal sense, the core principle of Shī‘ism, which is based on the religious authority of the Prophet’s household (*ahl al-bayt*), allowed the aforementioned missionaries from various Shī‘ī (and Sufi) backgrounds easily to implement their ideas in the context of Pamir, where its geographic isolation did not permit its regular transformation by later developments in Ismā‘īlism. There was no regular contact between the Ismā‘īlī Imams and their followers in Pamir from the post-Ālamūt period until their amalgamation with the Qāsim-Shāhī Imams and even until the time of the Aga Khan III (1885–1957), when the first (and the last during the Soviet reign) actual contact was established.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, those missionaries’ ideas eventually had an impact on the diverse religious traditions in Pamir. The missionaries brought not only Ismā‘īlism, but also some elements of Sufi and the Twelver Shī‘ī ideas. These elements are present in both the oral and written tradition of the Pamiris, in which the Twelver Shī‘ī Imams are praised and from which the genealogical lines of certain religious clans are derived. The *Gawhar-Rīz*, for instance, claims that the foremost ancestor of the local *khūjas* is Mūsā al-Kāzim (d. 799), the sixth Imam, whose succession to the Imamate actually divided the Shī‘īs into the Ismā‘īlī and the Twelver Shī‘īs. Likewise, many Sufi masters (Rūmī, Sanā‘ī, ‘Aṭṭār, Ansārī, etc.) are regarded as *pīrān-i ma‘rifat* (the masters of gnosis) of the faith. In other words, these Sufis, who possessed divinely blessed knowledge, are popularly believed to be part of the esoteric tradition of Ismā‘īlism.

During the concealment period (*dawr al-satr*), which continued in Ismā‘īlī history for several centuries (from the Ālamūt’s collapse until the Anjudān revival), several elements of the Twelver Shī‘ī and Sufi ideas became mixed with the Ismā‘īlī belief of the Pamiris. Their amalgamation, then, gradually led to the establishment of a new indigenous religious belief and practice called *Panj-Tanī* (the Fivers), a term that logically combines all of these ideas into a single frame.<sup>48</sup> Its underlying

point, like the rest of Ismā‘ilī doctrine, was the importance of the spiritual authority of the ever-present Imam (*Imām-i Zamān*), who is believed to be from the family of these ‘five pure men’ (*Panj Tan-i Pāk*). Like the term *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir*, it is also a shortcut to the diverse beliefs and rituals which were added to *Da‘wat-i Nāṣir* in the post-Nāṣir period. For instance, it is traditionally believed that *Charāgh-Rūshan* (Candle-Lighting), one of the central rites of Pamiri Ismā‘ilism, was probably introduced by Nāṣir-i Khusraw as a means of attracting people to attend his lectures.<sup>49</sup> It is also called *da‘wat* because it invites the believers to join in Nāṣir’s mission. Although its text and context do not contain any serious features, and have little to do with the deceased individual, it is performed only on the second night of a funeral ceremony. The ceremony includes certain rituals based on a fixed text called *Qandīl-Nāma* (the Candle Book), consisting of certain Qur’ānic verses and several religious lyrics (in Persian), which are claimed to belong to Nāṣir-i Khusraw.<sup>50</sup> There probably did exist a kind of preaching session like the *Charāgh-Rūshan* during Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s mission in Badakhshan, or even a pre-Islamic rite involving candle lighting.<sup>51</sup> However, the style of performing the ceremony and the context of the *Qandīl-Nāma* are closer to the post-Alamūt *taqiyya* ideas than to Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s Fātimid teachings. Similarly, from the context it is clear that Nāṣir-i Khusraw is not the addresser, but the recipient of the message:

در دعوت ناصر درا  
در دعوت ناصر درا  
فَاكِه فرزند علی

ای عاشق صاحب نظر  
ای مؤمن صافی گهر  
ناصر ز اولاد نبی



O insightful lover, join the mission of Nāṣir!  
O pious believer, join the mission of Nāṣir!  
Nāṣir is from the family of the Prophet,  
He is truly the offspring of ‘Alī.

In the old copies of the *Qandīl-Nāma*, which were recently edited, the author was named as Nīmatullāh.<sup>52</sup> One cannot be entirely sure whether this name refers to the founder of the Nīmatullāhī Sufi order, Shāh Nīmatullāh-i Walī (d.1431), although it seems that the text was strongly

influenced by this Sufi order.<sup>53</sup> Most probably, the influence was through the *dā’īs*, who came to the region in the post-Alamūt period, and may have belonged to this Sufi order. Likewise, in the higher levels of the hierarchy, there was a very close relationship between the Ismā‘īlī Imams and Nīmatullāhī Sufis in the later periods. For instance, Imam Shāh Khalīl Allāh III (d.1871) was married to the daughter of one of the Nīmatullāhī Sufis of Kirmān, Sidq ‘Alī Shāh.<sup>54</sup> There are also some references to the Twelver Shī‘ism in the old copies of the *Qandīl-Nāma*, in which the propaganda about this branch is clearly expressed; for instance, it declares that the Twelver Shī‘ism is the only true religion:

در شرع نبی چو او تمام است خوش گو صلوات مصطفی را <sup>55</sup>	دین دین دوازده امام است از شرع برون همه حرام است
--	---

The true religion is that of the Twelve Imams,  
It is completed in the divine law of the Prophet,  
Illicit are all those outside the divine law,  
Convey eloquent salutation upon the Prophet!

The other sign of the Twelver Shī‘ī’s presence in the Ismā‘īlī tradition of Pamir is a rite called *Shadda*, a ten-day commemoration during the month of *Muharram*, when Imam Ḥusayn (d.686) was killed by Yazīd; hence Ḥusayn is worshiped as ‘the great martyr’ (*shahīd ush-shūhadā*) by the Shī‘īs.<sup>56</sup> It is clear from the context that the term *shadda* is connected to the word *shahīd* (pl. *shuhadā*) in the case of Ḥusayn, although it tends to have an obscure meaning when it is read in isolation. Even the local *khalīfas*, some of whom I had the chance to interview, were not entirely sure about its terminological background. One way of approaching this issue, therefore, is to focus on its applied meaning as derived from the terminological corruption. In other words, one can argue that the term is a corrupted version of one of the following four Arabic or Persian words.<sup>57</sup> Firstly, there is a similar word in Arabic, *shadda*, meaning ‘string’ (of pearls, etc.), which appears to be unconnected to the idea of a martyr or any ceremonies. Secondly, the term may have been derived from the Islamic bipartite confessional word for faith, *shahādat* ('there is no God, but Allāh and Muhammad is His messenger'), which is one of

the five pillars of Islam. It testifies not only the oneness of God, but also legitimises the religious authority of Muhammad, and, according to the Shī‘is, the authority of his household (*ahl al-bayt*), the most important of whom is believed to be Ḥusayn, ‘the father’ (*Padar-i Imāmān*) of the Shī‘ī Imams. Thirdly, it is possible that the term *shadda* is derived from the Arabic word *shadīd* (hardship), because, as the further examination of the nature of the ritual shows, the ten days of mourning do really resemble a hardship. Fourthly, it may come from the Persian word *shuda* (happened), which refers to an event that has already occurred. Hence, *shadda* seems to be a localised version of an Arabo-Persian term that expresses the idea of a martyr in the Pamiri context, performed in this particular rite concerned with Ḥusayn’s death. Although this rite is almost forgotten in many parts of Pamir, it persists in Wakhān and preserves its homogenous features that are completely different from those performed in the Twelver Shī‘ī communities. In Pamir, the ceremony does not involve such extreme performances of self-mutilation as *sina-zanī* (beating chests), *shamshīr-zanī* (sword-beating) and *zanjīr-zanī* (chain-beating).<sup>58</sup> It is rather a sober ceremony of self-devotion and communal remembrance of Imam Ḥusayn as one of the most important Imams in the history of the Shī‘is. During the ten days of mourning, it is forbidden to celebrate happy occasions, such as weddings, moving to a new house, or birthdays, or to engage certain activities, such as building a new house, slaughtering animals or cutting down trees. The tenth day of the commemoration, which is called *āshūrā*, tends to be a happy occasion compared with the extreme activities of the Twelver Shī‘ī. On this day, both men and women take a ritual bath, don clean clothes and visit shrines, where the ceremonies of *khudāyī* (serving free meal), *qaṣā’id-khānī* (singing religious songs) and *qur’ān-khānī* (qur’ānic recitations) are held.

### Saints and Shrines

Shrine culture is an important part of the indigenous beliefs and practices associated with the rituals of shrine visitation and saint veneration.<sup>59</sup> Saints (*buzurgān*) in Pamir are largely from three categories. To the first

category belong the saints of Shī‘ī and Sufi legend, who are not identified with particular tombs but are imaginary enshrined in a particular space, where they are believed to perform certain kinds of miracles. This category includes ‘Alī, his wife Fatima, his horse Dul-Dul, Shī‘ī Imams, Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Khidr, the pious mystical prophet associated with the ‘water of life’. The second category consists of the above mentioned traveller-dervishes. Finally, the line is completed by local *pīrs*. All the categories of saints are equally venerated and their memories are contained in brief tales of their wise precepts, virtues and miracles, traditions that comprise an important part of the local shrine culture.

Shrines in Pamir occur in variety of forms, such as mounds of multicoloured stones, holy springs, trees, half-ruined houses and in modern times as shrine-museums. The terms that are employed in local usage for the shrines come from either Arabic or Persian. For instance, if a shrine contains only trees or mounds of multicoloured stones, it is usually called *āstān* (threshold), which exist in each and every village of the region. In some cases, the term *mazār* is used to describe the shrines that are identified with tombs of particular saints. This term originates from Arabic verb *zāra* (to visit) and the noun *ziyāra* (visitation), and its Persianised version *ziyāratgāh* (the place of pilgrimage). The most important *mazārs* of Pamir belong to the second category of the saints, the traveller dervishes Shāh Burhān (in Shākh dara) Shāh Qambar-i Āftāb and Shāh ‘Isām al-Dīn (in Wakhān). The last commonly used term is *qadamgāh* (lit. stepping place). The shrines identified with this term usually belong to the first category of the saints, who are not buried there, but are believed to have visited the places and left their ‘holy footprint’ (*qadam-i mubārak*) or sign (*nishān*) in the form of hot springs (*chashma*), sycamore (*chinār*) and stones. For example, the persons of ‘Alī, Fātima and Imam Zayn al-Ābidīn are imaginatively enshrined in Namadgūt, Yamchun and Tim villages of Pamir. Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s *qadamgāh*, in the Porshnev village of Shughnān, is represented by a very old *chinār* and hot spring (*chashma-yi Nāṣir*).

Likewise, there are several Persian words for shrines, part of which usually translates as ‘place’ as in *ārāmgāh* (place of tranquillity), *dargāh*

(court or tomb of holy men) and *jā-yi muqaddas* (sacred place). These terms, however, are not fully applied in the local Pamiri context. In addition, there is another type of holy place in the region known as ‘the house of orders’ (*farmān-khānā*). Here, a very special part of the house contains holy relics, including a copy of the Qur’ān, Ismā‘ilī books and books attributed to Ismā‘ilism and the holy relics such as the orders or instructions (*farmān*) of the Imam and his “blessed hair” (*mu-i mubārak*) and “sacred picture” (*‘aks-i mubārak*).

In the past, the shrines were constructed by believers in order to have a more direct contact with supernatural powers at the places where the saints were buried or were believed to have performed some kind of miracle during their lifetime, and to receive spiritual blessing (*barakat*) from them. The relationship between the devotees and God is connected via their relationship to the shrines and it is this underlying unity of a shared relationship that justifies the local idea of holiness and sanctity.

Thus, it is evident that the Pamiri Ismā‘ilī tradition in the post-Alamūt period was significantly influenced by various Islamic beliefs and practices, especially those of the Twelver Shī‘ism and Sufism. These doctrines were brought by the non-Ismā‘ilī traveller missionaries as well as the Ismā‘ilī *dā‘īs* themselves, who under the political pressure from an anti-Ismā‘ilī campaign of that period had to conceal their true faith (*taqiyya*) and seek refuge in remote places like the Pamir Mountains. Over the course of time, non-Ismā‘ilī elements were indigenised and accepted as part of traditional Ismā‘ilī beliefs and practices.

## ENDNOTES

1. Nehemia Levtzion, “Toward a Comparative Study of Islamisation”, in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 17.
2. Samuel Stern, “The Early Ismaili Missionaries in North West Persia and in Khurasan and Transoxiana”, *BSOAS* 23 (1960): 56–90. Patricia Crone and Luke Treadwell, “A New Text on Ismailism at the Samanid Court”, in *Text, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards*, ed. Chase F. Robinson (Leiden, 2003), 38–67.
3. For the Sāmānīds see Richard Frye, “The Samanids” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Richard Frye, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 136–595. Narimon Nematov, *Sāmāniyān* (Dushanbe, 1989).
4. For the Qarakhanids, see Peter Golden, “The Karakhanids and Early Islam”, in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 343–370.
5. For a contemporary case study on the Islamisation of Central Asia, see Devin DeWeese, *Islamisation and Native Religion in the Golden Horde* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). He discusses the issue of Ozbeg’s (a Mongol ruler) conversion to Islam on the basis of local conversion narratives.
6. Yuri Bregel, *Notes on Central Asian Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana, 1996), 5–10.
7. Bahadur Iskandarov, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie i politicheskie aspecti istorii Pamirskikh Knyazhestv: xv-pervaya polovina xix veka* (Dushanbe: Danish, 1983), 36.
8. Vladimir Minorskiy, ed. and trans., *Hudūd al-‘Ālam*, “The Regions of the World”: *A Persian Geography* (London, 1937), 120–121.
9. Babajan Ghafurov, *Tājīkān: Tārīkh-i Qadīm, Qadīmtarīn va ‘Aṣrhā-yi Miyāna* (Dushanbe: Irfān, 1983), 328.
10. To date, although *qah-qaha* is not the name of a particular person (but rather a title of a ruler or a common ancient Persian designation of a foreign indistinct and incompressible language and alien people), in this case it indicates a person’s name, most probably because he was the main chief and people referred to him as ‘the king’.
11. For archaeological information on Wakhān’s castles, see Aktam Babaev, *Kreposti Drevnego Wakhana* (Dushanbe: Dānish, 1973).

12. For some details on the *siyāh-pūsh* people of Wakhān, see Andrei Snesarev, “Religiya i obichayi gortsev zapadnogo Pamira” *Turkestanskie vedomosti*, no. 90 (1904): 412.
13. The full version of the story was recorded in August 2001, recounted from Jumaqul Davlatqadamov in Wakhān, which mostly agrees with the local narrative called *Qissa-yi Qah-qaha* (the Story of Qah-qaha) obtained by the Russian military authority in Pamir, Alexander Mukhanov, in 1909. This manuscript is preserved in the Asiatic Museum of the Academy of the Science of Russia (former USSR) under class mark ‘A 896’.
14. On the issue of whether Central Asia practised Zoroastrianism, refer to Richard Foltz, “When Was Central Asia Zoroastrian?” *The Mankind Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1998): 189–200.
15. The phrase ‘imaginary shrine’ is here to refer to a shrine (*mazār*, *āstān*, *qadamgāh*, *ziyāratgāh*) where a saint (*buzurgvār*), whose name it contains, may not physically be buried in or even had visited the site which is believed to be sacred by the locals.
16. The shrine or ‘hot-spring’ of Fātima (*Chashma-yi Bībī Fātima*) is located in the Vichkut village of Wakhān.
17. There are various editions and translations of this book. See, for example, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāma*, ed. Dabir Siyāqī (Tehran, 1974). *Safarnāmah az rūy-i nuskhah-yi Rinūld Nīkulsūn*, by Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Hamīd al Dīn (Abū Mu‘īn) 481/1088 (Tehran: Dunyā-yi Kitāb, 1982).
18. In the Fātimid hierarchy of the *Da‘wa*, *dā‘ī* was a rank given to an eminent person who was in charge of the Ismā‘ilī mission in a particular province called *jazira*, lit. ‘island’. For the Fātimid network of the *Da‘wa*, see Abbas Hamdānī, “Evaluation of the Organisational Structure of the Fātimid Da‘wa” in *Arabian Studies* 3 (1976).
19. For that, see Heinz Halm, “The Ismā‘ilī Oath of Allegiance (‘ahd) and the Sessions of Wisdom (*majālis al-hikma*) in Fātimid Times” in *Medieval Ismā‘ilī History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 91–115.
20. Andrei Bertels, *Nasiri Khusraw i ismailism* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo vostochnoy literaturi, 1959), 125.
21. For ‘Alī b. Asad see, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1., s.v. “‘Alī b. Asad”.
22. Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Dīvān*, ed. Mahdī Muhaqqiq (Tehran, 1974), 17, 60, 96, 108, 113, 144–145, 154–55.
23. Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Zād al-Musāfirīn*, ed. Badhl al-Rahīm (Berlin, 1923), 3, 402.

24. The story also claims that, at the same time, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, the founder of the Nizārī community in Iran, left Cairo with Mustansir’s grandson, Nizār, after the coup (in 1094) in the Fāṭimid court organised by the Turkish guard and Mustansir’s son by his Turkish wife, Musta‘lī.
25. The chronologies of the manuscript as well as the oral stories do not correspond with the historic facts of the time. For instance, Mustansir died in Cairo in 1094, fourteen years after Nāsri Khusraw’s death (1080).
26. For the Sufi system of hierarchy, refer to *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: A dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Muhammadan Peoples*, vol. 4., s.v. “Walī”.
27. For a short biography of Sūhrāb-i Valī see *The Persian Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Badakhshānī Sayyid Suhrāb-i Valī”.
28. Wladimir Ivanov, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature* (Royal Asiatic Society: London, 1933), 93. Sayyid Sūhrāb Valī Badakhshānī, *Si va Shish Sahifa*, ed. Ujaqī (Tehran, 1961).
29. To date, the death of the Fāṭimid Imam-Caliph al-Mustansir in 1094 caused another schism in the Ismā‘īlī community based on the succession dispute. His youngest son, al-Musta‘lī (d.1101), came to power with the support of his brother in-law and the Fāṭimid vazīr, al-Afdal. However, some Ismā‘īlīs, including the Persian community, led by the *dā‘ī* Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d.1124), did not recognise the authority of Musta‘lī and claimed that Mustansir’s eldest son, Nizār (d.1095) was the rightful Imam. That is where the name ‘Nizārī-Ismā‘īlī’ comes from as a distinguishing term for the followers of Imam Nizār. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ established its political and religious authority around the mountain castles of Alamūt in northern Persia. The Alamūt Ismā‘īlī state, which lasted for more than a century (1090–1257), was a big challenge to the Sunni Seljuk dynasty both in political and religious matters. The basic principle of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ’s ‘new mission’ (*al-da‘wa al-jadīda*), which is to reform the very Shī‘ī Ismā‘īlī notion of the authority of the Imam by introducing the doctrine of *ta‘līm*, is based on the authoritative teaching of the Ismā‘īlī Imam. In his famous *Chahār Fasl* (Four Chapters) he asserts that human reason (*aql*) by itself cannot obtain knowledge (*ilm*) of the Truth (God) unless it is guided by the unique authoritative teacher (*mu‘allim-i ṣādiq*), the rightful Imam from the family of the Prophet Muhammad. For more details on Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, see Farhad Daftary, “Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and the Origins of the Nizārī Ismā‘īlī Movement” in *Medieval Ismā‘īlī History*, ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 181–204.

30. Nāṣir Najmī, *Sarguzasht-i Ḥasan-i Ṣābbāḥ va Qal'a-yi Alamūt* (Tehran: Chap-khanai Āshnā, 1997), 267–268.
31. For the Alamūt strongholds refer to: Marshal Hodgson, “The Ismā‘ilī State”, in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 422–482.
32. For a list of Pamiri Ismā‘ilī literature, refer to Vladimir Ivanov, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature* (RAS: London, 1933), 88–119. Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (London, 2004).
33. Aleksey Bobrinskoy, *Gortsi verkhoviya Pyandja (vakhantsi i ishkashimtsi)* (Moscow, 1908), 40.
34. According to the *Uvaysī* Sufi doctrine, one does not need to have a living spiritual guide in one’s quest for God. The *Uvaysī* Sufis claim to have direct spiritual contact with God. For the *Uvaysī* Sufism in Central Asia, refer to Devin DeWeese, *An “Uvaysī” Sufi in Timurid Mawarannahr: Notes on Hagiography and the Taxonomy of Sanctity in the Religious History of Central Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana, 1993).
35. Badakhshī and Surkhafsar, 100–101.
36. Aleksey Bobrinskoy, “Secta Ismailiya v Russkikh i Bukharaskikh Pre-delakh Sredney Azii” *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* 1 (Moscow, 1902).
37. Andrey Stanishevskiy, ed. *Sbornik arkhivnikh documentov i materialov po istorii Pamira i ismailizma (1902–1931)* (Moscow: unpublished), 10.
38. Iskandarov, 57.
39. For a detailed account of the Muḥammad-Shāhī Ismā‘ilīs, see Vladimir Ivanow, “A Forgotten Branch of Ismā‘ilīs” *The Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* (London, 1938): 56–79.
40. Iskandarov, 49.
41. *Gawhar-Rīz*, 22.
42. Percy Sykes, *A History of Afghanistan* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1940), 341.
43. Vladimir Ivanow, *A Forgotten Branch of Ismailis*, 60–61.
44. Farhad Daftary, *A Short Introduction*, 194.
45. Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā‘ilīs*, 490–491.
46. Leyonid Kharyukov, *Anglo-Russkoe sopernichestvo v Tsentralnoy Azii i Ismailism* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo moskovskogo universiteta, 1995), 72.
47. In 1923 the Aga Khan commissioned one of his close *murīds* called Sabz ‘Alī, who was later honoured with the title of *pīr*, to visit the Soviet Pamir and persuade the Ismā‘ilīs of the region to adjust their lives to the newly established political regime. In his trips to Pamir Sabz ‘Alī was accompanied by some locals and Russian military officers. For more details on his

trip see, “Voyage of the Pīr Sabzali in Central Asia”, <http://heritage.ismaili.net/Sources/pirsabzali>.

48. The number five refers to the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fāṭima, his cousin and son-in-law ‘Alī, and his grandsons: Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.
49. It is worth indicating that Wladimir Ivanow was one of the first European scholars to give a brief presentation of the *Charāgh-Rūshan* in English in his article “Sufism and Ismailism: Chiragh-Nama” *Revue Iranique d’Anthropologie* 3 (1959): 13–70.
50. For a text of the *Qandil-Nāma* see Wladimir Ivanow, “Sufism and Ismailism”, 60–70.
51. It is believed by some Ismā‘īlī authors that the *Charāgh-Rūshan* was originally a common Shī‘ī rite whose history dates back to the time of the Imams al-Bāqir (d.732) and his son Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d.765). For this account, see Naṣīr al-Dīn Hunzai *Chirāgh Rawshan* (Karachi, 1994). Azizullah Najib, *Nazari ba Tārīkh-i Charāgh-Rushan dar Āsiyā-yi Markazī* (Karachi: Ma‘ārif-i Islāmī, 1976). Gulhasan Mirhasan, “Charāgh-Rushan hamchun Sunnat-i Ismā‘īlī” *Mas’alahā-yi Pāmirshināsī*, 5 (Dushanbe: Dānish, 2003): 163–178. In the same journal, another author attaches it even to a so-called Arian tradition. For this speculation, see Abusayyid Shokhumorov, “Charāgh-Rūshankunī—Sunnati Āriyāīyu Ismā‘īlī”, 141–162.
52. In the light of the modernisation of the Ismā‘īlī rites of Pamir, the text of the *Charāgh-Rūshan* was edited and renewed by Faqir Muhammad Hunzai from the Institute of Ismā‘īlī Studies in London.
53. For Nīmatullāhī Sufism, see Terry Graham, “Shāh Nīmatullāh Wali: Founder of the Nīmatullāhī Sufi Order” in *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufis (1150–1500)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 173–190.
54. Farhad Daftary, *A Short Introduction*, 195.
55. This verse is taken from an old copy of the *Qandil-Nāma* preserved in the private collection of a local Wakhī *khalīfa* from the Yamg village, Mamadbek Qurbonov.
56. For Ḥusayn and the event of Karbalā, see Barkat ‘Alī, *Tragedy of Karbalā and Martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn* (Faisalābād: Dār al-Ihsān, 1984).
57. One of the specific characteristic of the Pamiri languages (Wakhī, Shughnī-Rushānī and Rānī or Ishkashimi), as well as some local Tajik dialects, is that they do not have several strong sound voiles like ‘h’ presented by the Arabic letters *hā-yi hawaz* and *hā-yi hutī*. Therefore, any Arabic or Persian word employed in the Pamiri context automatically loses these voiles and transfers it to the local usage, as with the aforementioned term ‘madō’ (*madh*).

58. For the Twelver Shī'ī Āshūra, see *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Modern Islamic World*, vol. 1., s.v. “Āshūrā”.
59. Although the application of the Christian term ‘saint’—referring to the holiness and sanctity of persons, and the institution of sainthood supporting it—in the Islamic context remains a complicated issue, it does have its equivalent in Sufism and Shī'ism, represented by the saints, *awliyā* (sing., *walī* whose root comes from the verbs *wala*, “to be near” and *waliya*, “to govern” and literally translates as ‘near’, ‘friend’, ‘protector’ or ‘helper’) and the homogenous institution of the Imamate (in Shī'ism) or *Wilāyat* (in Sufism). For more details on the holiness of persons in Islam, see M. Deny, “God's Friends: The Sanctity of Persons in Islam”, in *Sainthood: Its Manifestation in the World of Religions*, ed. Richard Kiechefer and George Bond (California: University of California Press, 1988).

# CHAPTER 2

# MUBĀRAK: LIFE AND TIMES

## 2.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: AN OVERVIEW

The nineteenth century was the epoch for the dramatic changes in the political life of Badakhshan and the Pamir principalities caused by the Russian and the British colonial policy of expansion. Both contemporary superpowers tried to expand their sphere of influence in each and every corner of Central Asia; at that point, it was Pamir's turn. The Russians from the north (modern Kyrgyzstan) and the British from the south (India) became involved in a political struggle, known as 'the Great Game'. Inspired by the British colonial rule in India (whose troops were forced to leave Afghanistan in 1880 following the second Anglo-Afghan war, although they retained control of the country's foreign policy), in 1893, Wakhān, once a semi-independent principality (*mīri-garī*), was subjugated by the Afghan troops of the newly established reign of 'Abd al-Rahmān Khān (1880–1901), as were the remaining mountain principalities, including Badakhshan, Darvāz, Vanj, Rushān, Shughnān, Ghārān and Ishkāshim. Hence, the new Afghan regime, based on religious discrimination and political terror, was stationed in that region.

The administration was taken over by the Afghan clerics and judges of Pashto tribal origin and Sunni background. The Afghan occupation of Pamir was legitimised by the 1895 Anglo-Russian pact, according to which the aforementioned principalities were divided between Russia and Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the eastern parts of the Russian Pamir, including some parts of Wakhān’s territory, were left under the jurisdiction of the general-governor of Turkistan, but its western parts were entirely given over to the Bukhārā Emirate, a protectorate of Russia. The Bukhārīs, like their co-religionists, the Afghans, tried to impose their Sunni way of life on the Ismā‘ilīs, which consequently led to disagreements and later uprisings of the local people. For instance, in 1904, in several villages of Wakhān, people refused to pay the newly imposed religious taxation, *zakāt*. This refusal ended in a revolt that consequently caused the Bukhārā political administrators and tax collectors to leave the region permanently.<sup>2</sup>

### Pamir and Badakhshan

It is worth emphasising that the misuse of the geographic term ‘Pamir’, originally referring to the entire Pamir Mountains, also started in the nineteenth century, most probably by the Russians. Later, its adjective *Pamiri* was applied in the ethno-cultural context of the historically subsisting regions of Rushān, Bartang, Sughnān, Shākhvara, Ishkāshim, Wakhān and Murghāb with various linguistic backgrounds. It even became a matter of common ethnic identity for the inhabitants of these regions in the second half of the twentieth century. Similarly, there is still a misconception about the application of the term ‘Badakhshan’ in the context of those regions. The term itself is derived from the word *Badakhshi*, the name for an ethnic group of the region, who, contrary to the Pamiris, speak *Dari* and belong to the Sunni (*Hanafī* school) Islam. Historically, the term is applied to a political entity in the north-east of modern Afghanistan, where the kingdom of Badakhshan has existed since early times, either as a particular protectorate of the neighbouring super-powers or when enjoying temporary independence under strong local rulers, like Bahā al-Dīn (in the Timurid period ) and Yār

Bek (under the Ashtarkhānids).<sup>3</sup> Badakhshan, therefore, although itself a semi-independent kingdom, has always held semi-control over the Pamir principalities, a fact that consequently led some modern scholars as well as politicians to make terminological generalisations with regard to the mountainous regions of the Pamirs. On the other hand, as some sources in the local Pamiri oral tradition claim, there seems to have been a sophisticated policy of religious and cultural assimilation conducted by the Sunni Badakhshani kings (and later Bukhārā envoys) to convert the local Ismā‘īlīs to the Sunni faith. Yazgulām, for instance, once a Shī‘ī valley, was forced to follow the Sunni *Shari‘at*. Likewise, it is claimed that the rulers of Badakhshan not only imposed religious conversion, but also tried to change the vernacular languages of the Pamiri people into Persian. During the reign of Yār Bek (d.1707), believed to have continued for fifty years with several short intervals, the supposedly Shughnī tongue of the inhabitancies of Ghārān, a valley in the modern Ishkāshim districts of Tajikistan and Afghanistan, was forcedly changed to the Badakhshani dialect of *Dari*, although, ironically, the Ismā‘īlī faith of its population remained unchanged. Although the authenticity of the story remains doubtful, one may assume that, if linguistic assimilation as such did actually occur, then it was more likely to have been a natural process of language change caused by socio-economic motives rather than a forced and one-off cultural conversion. Ghārān, a Tajik-speaking district in Pamir, has been famous for its rubies (*la‘l-i Badakhshān*) since the ninth century, as mentioned by sources like Al-Bīrunī, Istakhrī and the *Hudud al-‘Ālam*.<sup>4</sup> The main ruby mine is located in the Kūh-i Lal’ village (the rubies’ mountain) on the Tajik side of the border. As the historical chronicles show, the mine was always under the control of the Persian speaking rulers of Transoxiana, who probably contributed to the creation of the Persian-speaking environment in the region, possibly as a result of labour migration.<sup>5</sup>

It is, thus, evident that the application of the term ‘Badakhshan’ in the context of the mountainous regions of Pamir has political connotations motivated by colonial superiority, just as the geographical term ‘Pamir’ has ethno-cultural dimensions.

## 2.2. PIRSHIP: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIAL CONTROL AND ORGANISATION

An important factor in the religious context of the nineteenth-century Badakhshan and Pamir principalities was the existence of the institution of *pirship*, which was based on the religious as well as the socio-economic relationships between the ordinary believers (sing. *murīd*) and the guides (sing. *pīr*). Its authority, both religious and socio-economic, claimed to be based on the Ismā‘ilī doctrine of the Imamate. Since the Imam ‘physically’ (*jismānī*) was inaccessible, his will (*farmān*) was maintained through this network, which preserved some ranks or, as it was called, ‘the seven boundaries of religion’ (*haft ḥudūd-i dīn*), from the Fātimid and Alamūt periods.<sup>6</sup> The hierarchy consisted of seven ranks: Imam, *ḥujjat* (Imam’s Proof); *dā‘ī* (missionary); *pīr* or *mā’dhūn-i akbar* (the senior licentiate); *khalīfa* (*pīr*’s deputy) also referred to as *mā’dhūn-i aṣghar* (the junior licentiate); *mustajīb* (novice) and *murīd* (the status of the ordinary believers).<sup>7</sup> The first three of these ranks (apart from the Imam) had a symbolic meaning only or actually did not function in the context of Pamir. The most active agents of the network, therefore, were the *pīrs* and their deputies. From the religious point of view, they might have assumed their obedience to the authority of the Ismā‘ilī Imam, whose nature itself was complicated due to the aforementioned schism, and justified their religious authority under his name. Nonetheless, in practical terms, it seems that the Badakhshani *pīrs* enjoyed relative freedom until the time of the first Aga Khan (1817–1881), when their integration with the rest of the Nizārī-Qāsim-Shāhī Imamate was completed. To date, although the institution of *pirship* was formally dismantled by the late Imam, the Aga Khan III (d.1957) at the beginning of the twentieth century, it continued to function in Tajik (until the 1930s, when the last *pīrs* under the pressure of the communist regime had to migrate to Afghanistan) and Afghan Badakhshan until the twentieth century. Likewise, several elements of this institution still survive in Afghan Badakhshan.

Although the exact number of Badakhshani *pīrs* in the nineteenth century is unknown, according to Bobrinskoy in his interview with

Yūsuf Alī Shāh, there were approximately fifteen *pīrs* in Pamir and the neighbouring districts.<sup>8</sup> The entire region was divided into several religious estates of the particular *pīrs*, called *khwājagī* (household), consisting of the numerous *muriids*. One of the essential features of the network was its non-geographic distribution of the *muriids*' households. A district or village could have *muriids* of several *pīrs* led by their own *khalīfas*, but each *pīr* had his own specific way of teaching religion and collecting taxation. The most famous *pīrs* of that period were Sayyid Farrūkh-Shāh from Shughnān, Sayyid Ahmad from Shākh dara, Sayyid Mursal from Suchān, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Rahmān and Shāh Langar from Wakhān and Yāqut-Shāh and his son Shāh-Zāda Lays (d.1916) from Zebāk.

The network had two main functions; namely, religious guidance and the collection of taxes (*māl-i sarkār*) for the *pīrs* and, presumably, the Imam. A *pīr* was also referred to as 'the truthful teacher' (*mu‘allim-i ḥādiq*), which clarified his duty as the teacher of 'true' religion. It was a *pīr*'s obligation to interpret the doctrinal principles of the religion and give instructions to his *muriids* concerning the performance of religious rituals, and even the conducting of their personal lives. A *pīr*'s occasional visits to his estates, which were usually accompanied by an escort of *khalīfas* and *mustajībs*, were momentous events in the ordinary *muriids*' lives, as they perceived the *pīrs* as the representatives of the Imam. In these ceremonies, in addition to religious guidance, the *muriids* were allowed to touch the *pīr*'s clothes (*jāma*) and receive *tabarūk* (a sweetmeat with 'blessed' *du‘ā*). The *muriids* worshipped and adored both the Imams and the *pīrs* in the same way, believing them to be from the same source of guidance and salvation. A quotation from a local eighteenth-century poet Rubābī, who praises Imam Abū al-Hasan and *pīr* Shāh Navā, will suffice to illustrate this point:

گلی که رونق بوستان دین در چمن است  
نگین خاتم سلطان دین ابوالحسن است  
شها به درگه تو روی التجاء دارم  
به جز در تو پناه دیگر کجا دارم  
منم که دست به دامان شاه نوا دارم  
به شان مرحمت و اسم پاک محترمت<sup>9</sup>

The flower which is the glitter of the garden of religion,  
The seal-ring of the king of religion is Abu al-Hasan,  
O king, towards your court I shall turn my face in supplication,

For except your court there is no refuge for me.  
 I am the one, who appeals to Shah Nava for help,  
 With your blessing and under your pure and honourable name.

*Pīr Shāh Navā*, who survived three Imams and died during the Imamate of Abu al-Hasan (d. 1792), was one of the first *pīrs* of his clan to whom Mubārak-i Wakhānī's ancestors were related as the *murīds*.

In everyday life, however, it was the duty of the *khalīfas* to guide the *murīds* and lead the religious ceremonies concerning life and death. The *khalīfas* were not only the local priests, but also the actual agents or collectors of the religious taxes on behalf of the *pīrs*, who were supposed to pass them on to the Imam, retaining only a small portion for themselves. The amount of taxation was based on a normative portion of 'one in ten' (*az dah yak*), which meant that a *murīd* was obliged to pay part of both his non-liable and liable goods to his *pīr*. For instance, if he had ten sheep, one was meant to be *māl-i sarkār*. Although the *khalīfas* were not entitled to receive tax (they paid tax like the rest of the *murīds*) or a salary, they had other methods of deriving income from the *murīds*, based on the religious concept of alms-giving, called *khayriyāt* or *nazurāt*. There were (and in some places these still exist) three main occasions for paying non-obligatory taxes by the *murīds* during certain religious ceremonies led by the *khalīfa*. Firstly, at the end of the aforementioned *Charāgh-Rūshān*'s ceremony, the custom was to offer gifts to the *khalīfa* for his services. Secondly, he received some *nazurāt* during the recital of the *du'ā* in a charitable activity called *khudāyī* (lit. 'God's portion') that was performed by a member of the community. Thirdly, a *khalīfa* conducted his own annual 'bless-giving' sessions (*du'ā-dādan*) by visiting each *khwājagī* under his jurisdiction to receive alms for his services during the autumn season.

It is true that the network of *pirship* was deeply involved in the social and political lives of the region and had close contacts with other aristocratic clans of the society, most of whom had a relatively secular nature. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that, to some extent, religious life was separated from that of secular. The network of *pirship* potentially

divided the *pīrs* and the other religious clerics from the rest of the social and political institutions represented by various groups and clans. In addition to the aforementioned religious clans of the *sayyids* and *khūjas*, who actually supported the network, several other social groups were less involved in religious matters, such as the *mīrs* (kings), *shanas* (i.e., retired *mīrs*), *akābīrs* (army nobles) and *navkars* (guards).<sup>10</sup> The ordinary *murīds*' social status was *ra‘īyat* (commoners), as its title suggests, but only the most pious religious devotees (*mustajībs*) were involved in the actual activities of the network.

The *mīrs* constituted one of the main socio-political clans in the Pamir principalities up until the Afghan occupation. The title referred not only to the actual rulers, but also to the members of their clan, as shorthand for the 'royal family'. The most powerful principalities in the region were the *mīrs* of Wakhān and Shughnān on whom the other local *mīrs*, such as Ishkashim, Rushān and Shākh-Dara, depended. A principality was usually divided into several districts, called *sadda* (lit. 'a hundred', which probably referred to the number of households living there), which were ruled by the *mīr*'s sons or close relatives. For instance, Wakhān consisted of four *saddas*; namely Sarhad, Panja, Khandut and Ishtarkh, with a total number of 550 households.<sup>11</sup> Importantly, the *mīrs* have a very negative image in the memories of the ordinary people. In the oral tradition, they are described as *zālim* (oppressor) and *khūnkhār* (lit. 'blood-sucker'), which reflects the degree to which they exploited the *ra‘īyat*. It is said that the *mīrs* could sell an ordinary *ra‘īyat* (mostly children) as a slave or to give them as a gift to other *mīrs* or kings of Badakhshan. They occasionally executed a *ra‘īyat* for petty crimes. For example, a contemporary witness named *qādī* Khujam, who was present in the *mīr*'s court, relates how the last ruler of Wakhān, 'Alī Mardān (reign, 1877–1883), ordered a man to be executed merely because he was wrongly suspected of gossip (*ghaybatgari*).<sup>12</sup>

The *shanas* also originated from the *mīrs*' clan but, because their political importance was lost for some reason, they no longer belonged to this clan. Their connection to the aristocratic circles was mainly due

to their economic status. The *akābīrs* were merely a military clan, who supplied the *mīrs*' army with fresh recruits and provided them with everyday security. They had a special portion of an estate and were not obliged to pay secular taxes. In return, they had to be prepared for warfare at any time in support of the ruler. It is said that during the Afghan occupation the *akābīrs* of the Nitsum village (in Zebāk) demonstrated enormous resistance against the invaders that consequently, after the occupation, led to their higher taxation by the Afghan authorities.<sup>13</sup> The *navkars* were also a military clan, but their duties seem closer to policing than military activities; they also constituted the *mīrs*' personal guards.

It is worth stressing that, in religious terms, all of these aristocratic clans, despite their social positions, were the *murīds* of a particular *pīr* and, equally, paid religious taxes. On the other hand, a member of the *ra'īyat* group could rise to any higher social and political career in the principalities, by becoming a *qāḍī* (a judge) or *mingbāshī* (a village representative of the *mīr*). Likewise, in a religious sense, a learned and pious *ra'īyat* also had the chance to enter the circle of the *pīrs* by becoming a deputy of a *pīr* (*khalīfa*) or an honorary member (like *mustajīb*) of the *pīr*'s network. Occasionally, an intellectual *ra'īyat* could reach a higher religious status, such as that of *buzurgvār* (saint), commonly respected by all clans in society. Mubārak-i Wakhānī is a remarkable example of *ra'īyat*'s effort to break through the socio-political and religious clans of his time and achieve enormous respect among both.

### 2.3. A BIOGRAPHY OF MUBĀRAK

The exact year of Mubārak's birth and death are unknown for a very obvious reason; until the earlier years of the twentieth century, there was no form of civil registration concerning births and deaths in Pamir. The best way of remembering someone's year of birth or death (if necessary) was either through a comparative analogy with a famous event of that particular year or simply by the seasons, which is relatively unreliable in a chronological sense. In general terms, the former method could be

useful in unveiling a chronological fact of birth or death if the compared event is recorded in other sources. This method, unfortunately, cannot be applied in the case of Mubārak as no such record exists. Hence, our only biographic sources are the oral narratives preserved by his relatives and some autobiographic elements in his own poetry. The oral materials containing stories and legends about Mubārak are fresh in a historical sense. First of all, the events that they talk about occurred no more than a century ago, thus, there are fewer possibilities of omissions and additions. Secondly, some of the first generation narrators, who either witnessed Mubārak's life or heard about him from those who were in close contact with him, are still alive.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, there are several indications in Mubārak's own accounts (which will be discussed later) which elaborate the table of his lifetime as well as the approximate date of his death. It seems likely that he lived for about sixty years and died in the Islamic year 1320 (1903). Likewise, we have the third and fourth generations of his family members, whose biographical accounts are significant in composing Mubārak's chronology. It stands to reason that drawing a genealogical line of Mubārak's descendants will help us to determine the approximate year of his birth. According to the family oral tradition, Mubārak is the seventh ancestor in the family tree, which presumably begins in the late sixteenth century and is succeeded by four generations until the present time. It is said that he was married twice. He had no children with his first wife and, therefore, divorced her and a year later married another woman named Bibī Nāz, with whom he had three sons; namely, Zarabo (I), who died very young, 'Abdullāh (II), ('Abdullāh I was Mubārak's father) and Banda-Shāh. Even today there is a custom among the Pamiris to name their children after their fathers and grandfathers. There are, therefore, several names repeated in the family tree, which are marked in numerical order. This order also helps to determine the approximate date of the death of the former name holder with a gap of one or two years. For the sake of determining the chronological data about Mubārak's life, it is sufficient to present an example of the family tree of his second son, Abdullāh (II), whose date

of birth is unknown, but whose descendants were born in the following years: Amānallāh in 1885, Abdullāh (III) in 1940 and Sultān in 1972. It should be borne in mind that, until the first decades of the twentieth century and the advent of the Soviet Union, there was a custom of arranged marriages in Pamir, which took place at a very young age (girls aged 6–7, boys 9–10). Although the ‘child’ couples lived together, their actual adult life began somewhere in their late teens, when they were mature enough to produce children.<sup>15</sup> Mubārak, as a man of his time, would have been no exception. This leads us to assume that he might have divorced his first wife sometime in his early twenties because of not having children, and married Bibī Nāz the following year in accordance with the local custom that young men should not remain single for longer than a year. So, if his first child (Zarabo I) was born and died in Mubārak’s early twenties, then his second son Abdullāh (II) was probably born around the same period. Bearing in mind the fact of Amānallāh’s birth (1885) and Mubārak’s death (1903), and allowing an approximate generation gap of twenty years, one may assume that Abdullāh (II) was born in 1860/62, and his father, Mubārak, in 1839/41.

Mubārak, thus, was born in the village of Yamg in the Khandut district of Wakhān and spent almost all his life in this village. It is believed that Mubārak’s remote ancestor, someone called Iqbāl-Khān, migrated from Khurāsān to Wakhān as a result of religious persecution at some point in the sixteenth century. It is not known for sure what kind of political regime made Iqbāl-Khān take refuge in the mountainous region of Wakhān. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the political situation of Iran under Shāh Ismā'il Safavī, one would suggest that his refuge was probably motivated by the Safavid’s persecution of the Ismā'ilis, especially those of the Muhammad-Shāhī branch in Iran. As mentioned earlier, the growing religious and political importance of this branch under Imam Tāhir-Shāh became a matter of concern for Shāh Ismā'il. Consequently the Imam and many of his followers were forced to move to India in the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Some of his followers migrated to Transoxiana and even to its far distant parts like Pamir, where Iqbāl found his new home.

The summary of the story concerning Mubārak's ancestors is that, upon his arrival in Wakhān, Iqbāl was shown great hospitality by the region's contemporary ruler, Mīr Maskā, and was later appointed as the *mīr*'s personal secretary (*mīrzā*). Succeeding to this prestigious job was mainly due to the fact that as a 'city man' (*shahri*), Iqbāl was believed to be an educated man (*dānish-mand*), whose Khurāsānī degree of education was comparatively higher than that of Wakhānī standards of the sixteenth century. In return for his services, Iqbāl was entitled to an unknown monthly salary and given the *vasīqah* (the land license) of Yamg, which at that time was an uninhabited forest. The story elaborates on Iqbāl's dispute with the *mīr* that eventually costs his own life and that of his family, with the exception of an infant named Ṣāliḥ, who was in pastoral care (*shir-khār*) and lived with his relatives in another village called Chil-Tāq, five kilometres from Yamg. The *mīr*'s *navkars* were ordered to find and execute Iqbāl's family members in each and every village of Wakhān. To avoid the persecution, Ṣāliḥ was taken to the Zebāk province of Badakhshan and given asylum in the local *pīr*'s home, where he finally grew up. He then got married and had two sons Nekqadam (I) and Kārvān (I). Kārvān (I), lived for some time in the Chandīn village of the Shākh dara principality and then returned to his homeland, Yamg, where his sons Abdullāh (I), Davlatqadam (I) and Davlat (I) were born.<sup>17</sup>

As far as Mubārak's intellectual development is concerned, there are two main factors involved in this process. Firstly, as mentioned above, there was a strong family tradition of learning from which he remarkably benefited. He belonged to the newly forming social class of Wakhān's intelligentsia, who were involved in the intellectual and religio-political life of the region; several members of his clan (*avlād*) held some important socio-religious positions, such as judges (*qāḍīs*), local governors (*mingbāshīs*) and religious leaders (*khalīfas*).<sup>18</sup>

In addition, Mubārak himself believed to be an intellectually gifted person, a genius, who learned the entire Qur'ān by heart by the age of six. According to Mubārak's own accounts, his first teacher was his father, but officially he obtained a secondary education in the private school of the village's teacher (*mu'allim*), called Nekqadam (II). Secondly, it was

probably the intellectual landscape of the Yamg village that enhanced the process of Mubārak's intellectual growth. Yamg was one of the main educational centres of nineteenth-century Wakhān, where two types of schooling existed, namely, *khatu-savād* (lit. 'reading and writing' or primary) and secondary, whose focus was basic religious teaching (*ta‘līm-i dīnī*). Similarly, the other advantage of Mubārak's education was the predominantly Tajik-speaking environment of his village. It should be noted that the people of Yamg, contrary to the rest of the Wakhī or *Khik*-speaking valley of Wakhān, use a specific Tajik dialect similar to that of Zebāk (a district in modern Afghanistan). It is evident, thus, how close the connection is between the traditional argument about the migration of Mubārak's ancestors from Khurāsān, and Ṣāliḥ's later childhood in Zebāk. Language was, therefore, a vital factor in Mubārak's easy access to the Persian poetic and Sufi heritage since early childhood. Although there is no record of whether or not Mubārak attended any higher educational institutions (like madrasa), an examination of his major works shows that he was well aware of the knowledge of his time, such as the Arabic language, the Qur‘ān, ḥadīth, Sufism (*Tasawwuf*), Persian literature, astronomy and astrology (*Nujūm*), mathematics and music. His works are written in an elegant Persian linguistic and poetic style with the employment of a sufficient knowledge of Islamic theology and theosophy, which is equal to the standards of nineteenth-century Transoxiana and Iran.

Some traditional legends of little historical value relate Mubārak's claim that, as a young boy, he was recruited by an Afghan group of soldiers stationed in Fayḍābād (the capital of Badakhshan), and that several times he visited Kabul.<sup>19</sup> This claim, of course, does not fit within the chronology of his youth (1839–1859/61) and the Afghan occupation of Badakhshan and the semi-independent kingdoms of Pamir (1883). It is possible that he visited some of the provinces of the still independent Badakhshan, but there is, on the other hand, little evidence to be found in his own works to suggest that. In the following *rubā‘ī*, Mubārak himself admits that he never even visited Sanglīj, a town in the north-east of the

modern Afghan Badakhshan, although his thoughts were of Munjān, a valley in the southeastern part of the country:

گفتم که روم سیر کنم تا سر سنگلیج فکرم همه طی کرد به منجان نرسیدم  
 (MSS 011, 35.a)

I said, I will go and visit up to the border of Sanglīj,  
 Though my mind travelled all over, I never reached Munjān.

Quite apart from its value in helping to explain the issue of Mubārak's journeys, this *rubā'ī* tends to convey a slightly different message of a mystic connotation. To be sure, there are several geographic terms in Mubārak's poetry, which are not necessarily used in their real context, but merely employed in poetic imaginative form. This particular *rubā'ī* also seems to employ the two real geographic names in the sense of a metaphor. In doing so, he probably aims to signify the boundaries of knowledge, its nearest (Munjān) and furthest (Sanglīj) signposts. It seems to be a kind of Aristotelian idea of a never-ending journey of the mind in the quest for perfection, which is never obtained, and seeking the ultimate truth, which is never found.

As a learned man of his time, Mubārak was in the field of vision of both the local and later colonial governments; they, remarkably, appreciated his intellectual qualities and tried to use them for their own purposes. It is said, for instance, that the *mīr* of Wakhān once offered him a prestigious job, as *qādī* (judge) of the region, but Mubārak refused the post, instead suggesting one of his cousins (Ghulāmnabī), probably because of his mystic ambitions and thoughts. Likewise, it is believed that the authorities of the Bukhārā emirate after the establishment of their rule over Wakhān had good relationships with Mubārak, and that Amir 'Abd al- Ahad (1885–1910), to whom Mubārak dedicated one of his works, granted an annual scholarship for him. However, this claim has no evidential proofs.

There are several indications in Mubārak's own records suggesting that he lived for approximately sixty years. Although the autobiographical

elements in poetry do not always reflect facts, in several places Mubārak emphasises the age of sixty as the conclusion of his poetic career and the ultimate destination of his spiritual journey. In the following *rubā‘ī* he clearly indicates not only the exact year, but also the date and time at which his poetic inspiration ended, which is the 1st of *Shawwal* 1320 (01. 01. 1903):

چون رفت هزار و سه صد و بیست نشان از هجرت سرور دو عالم به جهان  
شد ختم رباعیات و شعر و غزلات یوم شنبه نماز عید قربان (MMS 09, 364b)

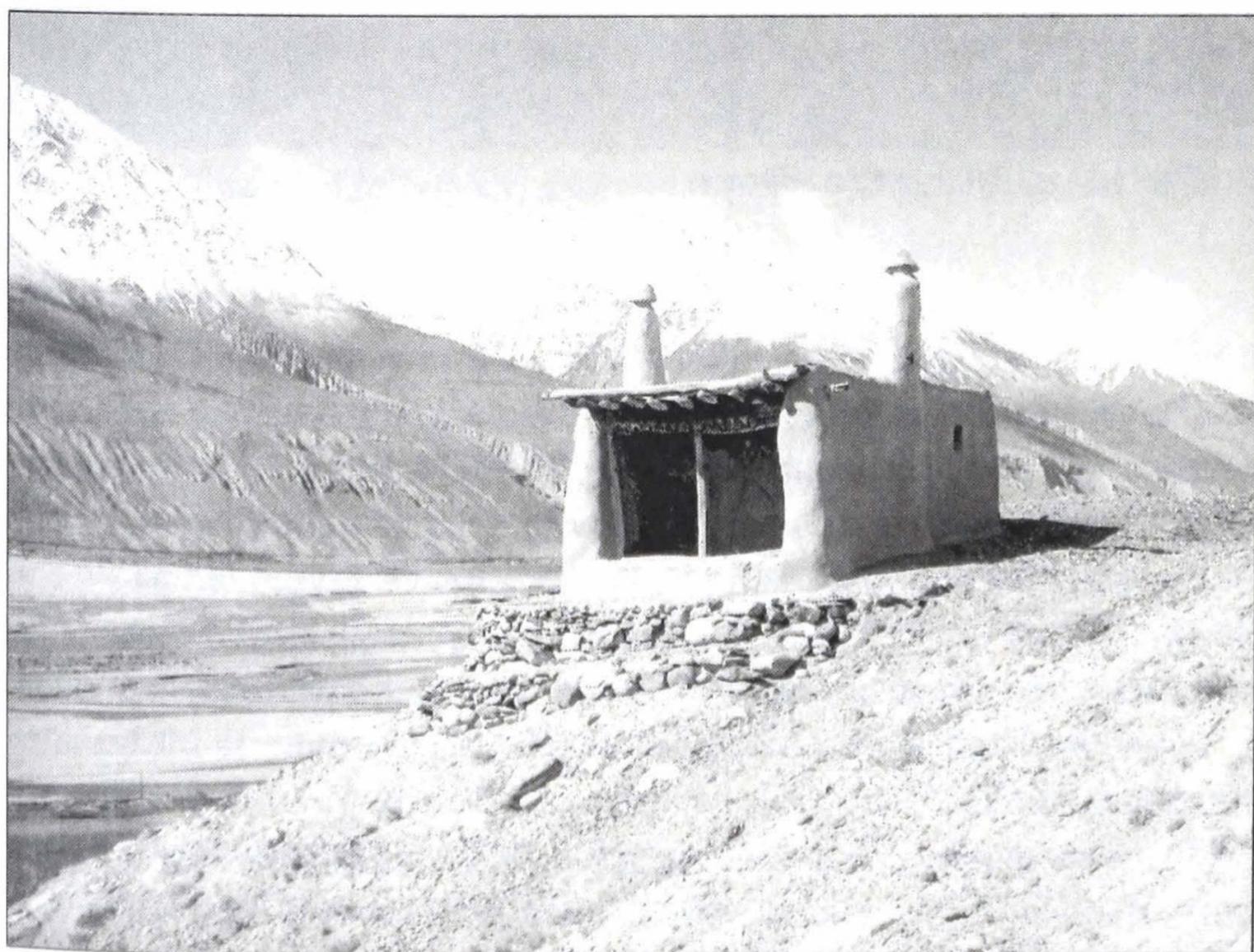
As one thousand, three hundred and twenty years had passed,  
From the *hijrat* of the leader of the two worlds [the Prophet],  
All *rubā‘īs*, poems and *ghazals* were completed,  
On Saturday, at ‘*Id-i Qurbān*’s prayers [‘*id al-adhā*].

This self-explanatory fact can be of considerable importance not only in the chronological termination of Mubārak’s poetic career, but also in unveiling the year of his death. Although this does not explicitly indicate the end of Mubārak’s life, it seems to be the final record we have of him so far. Likewise, bearing in mind his own emphasis on the importance of the age of sixty, it is, therefore, possible to argue that his life ended in 1903. The oral tradition suggests that Mubārak was aware of the exact day of his death and therefore dug his own grave a month before the actual event. Although he does not mention the day of his death, in the following *rubā‘ī*, the fact of digging his grave is clearly expressed:

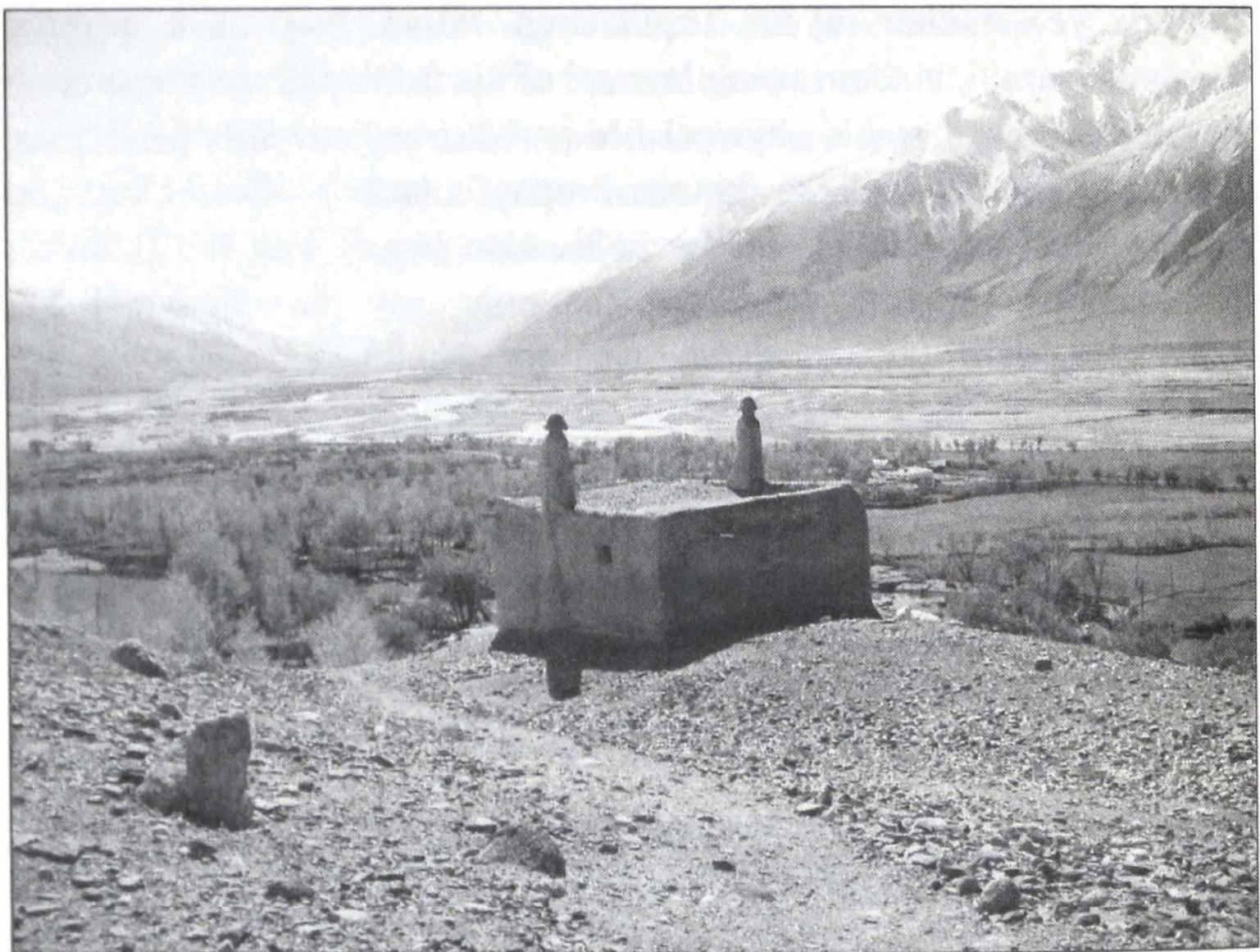
آن حلقه که بر شکنج زلف بت ماست حق داند اگر سلامت از وی کس راست  
ما پیش ز مرگ قبر خود کافته ایم تا مرگ خبر شود کفن در بر ماست (MSS 09, 352b)

The noose which is round the twisted tresses of our idol,  
None save God knows whether anyone can escape from it.  
We dug our grave before the death,  
So that when death becomes aware of us, we are already in the coffin.

There is yet another mystic explanation, which may have inspired Mubārak's intuition about being 'aware' of his death and the preparation for the final event in his physical life and journey towards perfection, originating from one of the famous Prophet's *ḥadīth*: "Die before you die". For a mystic on a quest for unification (*waṣl*) with the Beloved, like Mubārak, physical death was the only way through which the actual process of unity (*wahdat*) with the absolute existence (*wujūd*) could occur. He insists that it is he who anticipates the actual process of death and willingly advances towards it, not that death takes one's life against one's wishes. Accordingly, death is regarded as an important event in life, which opens up the route to its new, but internal phase and, therefore, needs to be celebrated with great joy, in the same way as



1. Mubārak-i Wakhānī's tomb in the village of Yamg.



2. The tomb facing the village.

a birthday. Likewise, it was a part of the Pamiris' tradition to celebrate their own death during their lifetime. For instance, until the nineteenth century, the aforementioned ceremony of the *Charāgh-Rūshan* consisted of two separate *da'wats*; namely *da'wat-i baqā'* (subsistence mission) and *da'wat-i fanā'* (annihilation mission), which were performed as funeral ceremonies. One of the main differences between these two ceremonies was that, unlike the latter, the former was performed while the individual involved was still alive, and could participate personally in his/her own funeral ceremony.<sup>20</sup>

Mubārak's tomb was constructed in 1910 (1328) by his students and relatives on the top of a hill in Yamg. The tomb consists of two spaces, namely a porch (*pīsh-vāz*) divided into two platforms by a corridor leading to the inside of the small room housing his grave (*gūr*). The tomb has two pinnacle domes over it, each of one-meter diameters.

The surface of the corridor is decorated with three *ruba‘īs*, inscribed by one of Mubārak’s students, Mullā Shamshīr (d.1950), who was one of the most respected poets of the region, and lived until the age of one hundred and twenty.<sup>21</sup> Although the scribe does not clearly indicate the authorship of the quatrains, he addresses them to Mubārak as a personal tribute to his *padar-khānd* (godfather) in the following way: “Mullā Shamshīr wrote some couplets (*bayts*) to Mubārak-Qadam-i Sufi, to whom I was a *pisar-khānd* (godson)”. In one of these complimentary quatrains, a sense of appreciation and impression about Mubārak’s Sufi life is expressed:

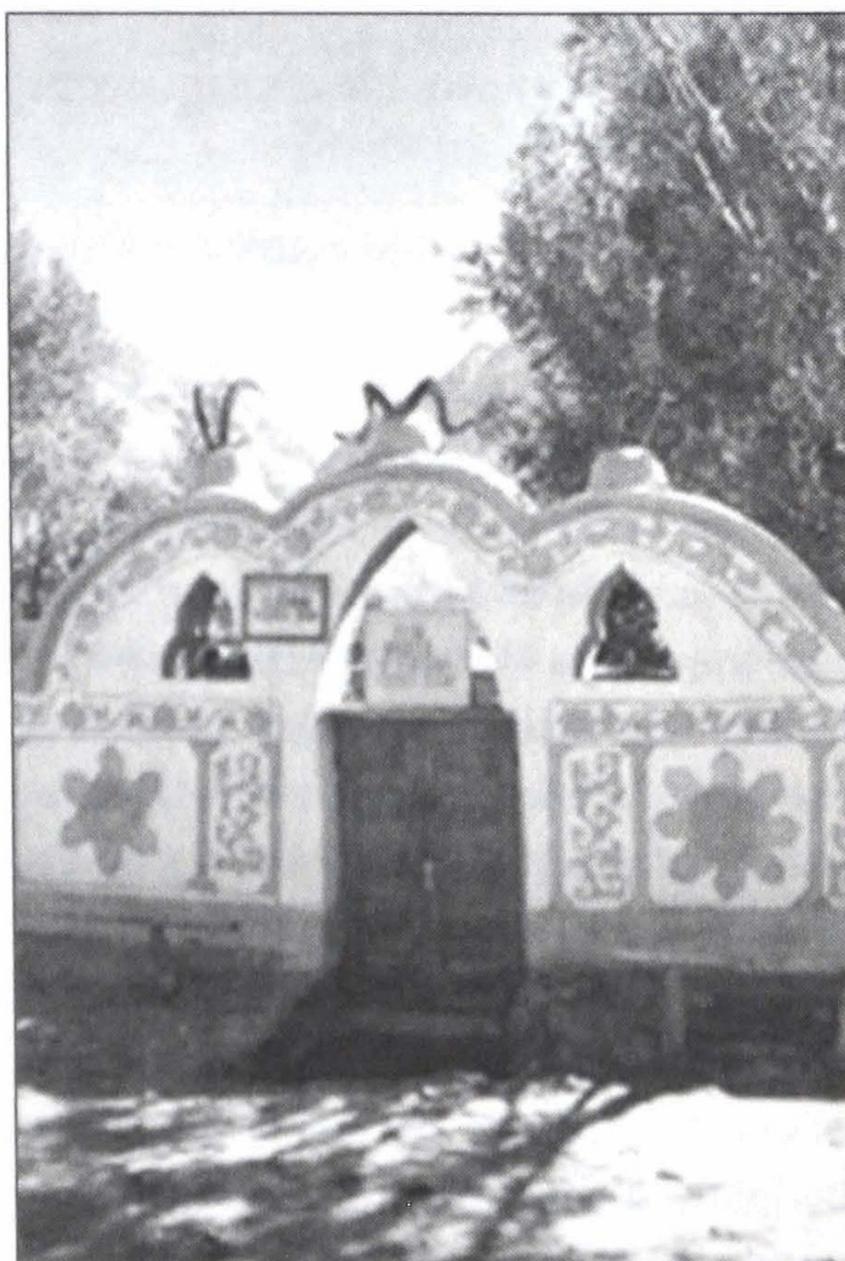
نفس از درگاه خود کردی جهاد	قبله گاه گنبدت پرنور باد
آفرین بر قدرت بازوت باد	نام نیکت در جهان مشهور باد

O Patron, may your tomb be full of light!  
 You made *jihad* with the ego of your own.  
 May your good name be famous throughout the world!  
 Bravo for the strength of your body!

In 1994, in Mubārak’s honour, a newly constructed museum was opened with celebrations in his hometown, Yamg. It has a big complex of four different edifices and two stone objects enveloping each other. The first two apartments, the *Farmān-Khāna* (house of orders) and the *Āsār-Khāna* (museum), constitute the main body of the complex. The *Farmān-Khāna* is the original house where Mubārak was born and lived his life. The *Āsār-Khāna* is a newly built museum in the modernised style of the Pamiri house. It is located in a garden next to the *Farmān-Khāna* and is surrounded by a three-metre wide decorated stone fence. On the front side of the *Āsār-Khāna* there is a big veranda (*pīsh-vāz*) divided by a narrow corridor leading inside the museum. It is usually used during the summer festivals of a social character. The inside of the *Āsār-Khāna* is divided into three compartments, namely the exhibition hall (*tālār-i namāish*) for demonstrating various ethnographic items of ancient Wakhān, the small library (*kitāb-khāna*) where Mubārak’s manuscripts and other books are preserved, and the sitting platforms used during the ceremony of *qaṣīda* recitation as well as for other social events. The last two edifices of the museum-shrine are Mubārak’s

tomb and his *chilla-khāna* (chamber or retreat), which are discussed in the next subchapter. The museum-shrine of Mubārak-i Wakhānī is one of the most important centres of local religious devotion and socio-cultural activity in Wakhān. Paradoxically, the museum, which was constructed on the basis of voluntary works (*hashar*) in Mubārak’s own private garden and the private donations (*khayriya*) of his countrymen, is officially the property of the state and belongs to the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan.

Thus, Mubārak was greatly respected during his lifetime and venerated after his death. He did not belong to the two noble religious clans of local importance, the *sayyids*, who claimed to be from the family of the Prophet, and the *khūjas*, the descendants of Sūhrāb-i Valī. Similarly, there is no evidence, either in his works or in local tradition, to suggest



3. Mubārak-i Wakhānī’s museum-shrine: The main gate.



4. The terrace of the museum-shrine.

that he ever tried to legitimise his authority in any way. Nevertheless, Mubārak was regarded as a ‘holy man’ (*buzurgvār*) during his lifetime and this title persists until the present. Mubārak-i Wakhānī is also known among his relatives and devotees as Sufi Mubārak-Qadam. This is a clear indication of the fact that he was not only a Sufi, but also obtained public recognition of his status as such. This was indeed one of the significant conditions for the sainthood in local perception.

## 2.4. SUFI

Although Mubārak does not provide an exact periodisation of his personal spiritual progress, there are several implicit references in his works to the most important moments or spiritual states (s. *ḥāl*) in his mystic life. These references, consequently, allow one to elaborate the chronology

of his mystic life and the allegory of his journey towards spiritual perfection. Accordingly, there were three main periods in his spiritual state; namely, *rastī* (awareness), *mastī* (intoxication) and *nīstī* (annihilation). One may assume that Mubārak's terminology for his spiritual progression was probably borrowed from the eleventh-century poet and Sufi from Hirāt, ‘Abdullāh Ansārī (d.1089), who, in his ‘The Hundred Grounds’ (*Sad Manzil*), introduced the three aforementioned degrees of love.<sup>22</sup> This assumption is further supported by the extent to which Ansārī occupies a remarkable place in the collective imagination of the people of Wakhān. His books or the books attributed to him are among the most respected religious literature in the region and his imaginary shrine is preserved in the village of Vrang, 5km from Mubārak's birthplace. Hence, the first period of Mubārak's spiritual progression, from the age of twelve to forty is the longest period of the realisation and engagement in the Sufi path of love; it is a period for making an ultimate decision about the chosen path and detachment from the physical world's fixed ideas and norms. Mubārak's own testimony in the following *rubā‘ī* shows that the first call for love was received at the very young age of twelve:

دل بست به دام و مبتلا کرد مرا شوخی که اشارهء بیا کرد مرا	تا عشق نظارء وفا کرد مرا نبال وفاست سال اندر ده و دو
---	---

(MSS 09, 7a)

As love faithfully gazed upon me,  
 It ensnared my heart and addicted me.  
 In quest for devotion at the age of twelve,  
 The jovial beloved signalled me to come.

There can be no doubt that, by the age of twelve, Mubārak was already aware of the basic ideas of Ismā‘ilī theosophy and the poetry of Persian mystics like Ḥāfiẓ, Rūmī, Sanā’ī and ‘Aṭṭār. Yet, this seems far too young for him to realise and accept the core principles of Islamic mysticism. For that reason, Mubārak himself asserts that until the age of forty he was involved in a quest for meaning:

جُسْتَمْ بِهِ سَمَاعْ جَامْ جَمْ خَوِيشْ چَهْلْ سَالْ  
 جَزْ نِيَسْتَ جَهَادِيْ

گر کنج به عزلت پی رفتار برآمد  
 واقف ز خود آن شد  
 (MSS 09, 315b)

For forty years I was looking for my ‘*Grail of Jam*’<sup>23</sup>,  
 No *jihād* can be like that.

When a corner of solitude was chosen to behave,  
 Then one’s self-awareness occurred.

This verse is of an interest for two main reasons. Firstly, it indicates that for forty years, Mubārak was in the pursuit of his ‘perfect soul’, metaphorically referred to as *Jām-i Jam* (the Grail of Jamshīd), in the state of ecstasy (*samā‘*). He sought to evaluate the righteousness of the chosen path and only at the end of this period he did become completely aware of himself, that is, of the meaning of his life and the way to lead it. Only then he realised that the quest for perfection should start within oneself before it progresses towards the divine. A further doctrinal point may explain Mubārak’s emphasis on the age of forty as the true starting point of his spiritual intoxication. His inspiration at this age was probably due to the symbolic meaning of the number forty in the Islamic context in general and Ismā‘īlism in particular. Traditionally, it is believed that the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation at the age of forty. Similarly, at this age, Nāṣir-i Khusraw was converted to Ismā‘īlism. A detailed examination of the religious importance of the number forty is provided in chapter 4, but, for now, let it suffice to say that Mubārak’s engagement with the Sufi path at the age of forty is clearly motivated by this number’s significance in Islamic tradition.

Secondly, it insists on the inner search for oneself in a detached corner, separated from the rest of the world. From that age onwards, Mubārak seriously followed the Sufi path for the attainment of reality (*rasidan ba ḥaqīqat*), which believes in God, through selfless devotion and extreme asceticism; love and spiritual intimacy; deprivation of the selfish passions (*bad-nafsi*) for the material world and its fixed ideas. Hence, this was the beginning of the second period of his spiritual state, that is, the period of intoxication (*mastī*), when the presence of the eternal source of

love and inspiration conquered his being; when the search for and desire to unite with the Beloved was intensified. In a self addressed poem from his *Dīvān-i-Kulliyāt*, after realising his spiritual path, Mubārak urges himself to join the ‘world of God’s unity’, access to which is possible only by spiritual retreat and through finding a ‘corner of solitude’. Indigence and supplication are described as wings, symbolising the ascension of his soul to fly to a higher reality:

گوشہ گزین و اندر ا در عالم وصال حق عجز و نیاز کاریات ای مبارک بال است و پر  
 (MSS 09, 102a)

Choose a corner and enter the world of God’s presence,  
 O Mubārak, submission and supplication are your wing and feather.

In practical terms, from that period onwards, Mubārak’s behaviour is said to resemble that of a Sufi or *zāhid* (ascetic), which was manifested in extreme retreat and complete separation not only from society, but from his own family as well. Mubārak, like other mystics, believed that the physical world was a veil for the spiritual or real world. So, in order to know the real world and determine the truth, one has to destroy every attachment to the physical world. He is said to have been unconcerned with the events around him; he even ignored such serious moments as the deaths of his close relatives. For instance, once, while he was meditating, somebody came and informed him about the death of his son Zarabo to which he just tranquilly replied ‘God is great’ (*Allāh Akbar*) and continued with his meditation. Family anecdotes relate that in that period Mubārak also wanted to divorce his wife by advancing an ascetic argument that there is no attachment to anyone except God. His wife cried, however, and pleaded with him so much that he allowed her to remain as his cook and housekeeper.<sup>24</sup>

From the physiological point of view, Mubārak is believed to have been a thin (*qāqina*) man of medium build with a very fair face (*nūrānī*) and a short beard, who wore a green turban (*sala*) and robe (*jāma*). He usually walked with his iron-tipped wooden stick (*'aṣā'-bilcha*)

that resembled a small, sharp-bladed spade. This tool is still preserved in the private collection of one of his relatives, Lutfullah Zaraboev, in Yamg.<sup>25</sup> Although there is no theoretical explanation about his wearing of green in Mubārak's works, one can assume that it was associated with the importance of this colour as a symbol of eternal life in the Islamic context. In the mystical dimensions, green symbolises the immortal prophet and guide, Khiḍr, who is described as 'the water of life' (*āb-i ḥayāt*), which keeps one alive or green. As will be discussed in chapter 3, Mubārak was actually initiated into the mystical path by Khiḍr, and, therefore, like any disciple, he presumably wanted to be or at least appear like his teacher.

Mubārak's corner of solitude (*gūsha-yi khalvat*) is called *balandak* (lit. raised area), a platform in his Pamiri house, that was surrounded by a highly-decorated wooden grating, like a huge cage. The traditional Pamiri house, many elements of which still survive, constitutes a complex construction involving a kitchen (*chkish*), a corridor (*barkinj*) and three main sleeping platforms (*razh*) situated around the central floor (*yōrch*), divided by four partitions (*mandal*). The entire wooden ceiling of the house consists of two strong parallel beams (*was*), which stands for the Ismā‘īlī idea of the Universal Intellect ('*Aql-i Kull*) and the Universal Soul (*Nafs-i Kull*), and are covered by seventy-two perpendicular beams (*dastak*), symbolising the general Shī‘ī idea of the seventy two martyrs of Karbalā, standing on five wooden pillars (*istin*), symbolising the aforementioned 'five pure bodies'. In the middle of the ceiling, there is a huge window (*ritsn*), which is used to serve both as a means of light, as well as a smokestack. The *ritsn*, symbolising a 'doorway' towards eternity, is surrounded by *chahār-khānā* (lit. 'four houses'), the most decorated part of the ceiling, standing for the four main angels (*firishta*); namely, Jabrā‘īl (Gabriel), Mīkā‘il (Michael), ‘Azāzīl (Azrail) and Isrāfīl (Seraphail).<sup>26</sup> Thus, the four angels positioned on the Universal Intellect and the Universal Soul guide the believers to climb up through the 'doorway' into a higher reality. Although, from a religious point of view, the Pamiri house itself was a kind of house of prayer, filling the gap created by the absence of mosques in the region,

Mubārak needed something more, an atmosphere of complete privacy which would fulfil his ascetic needs in his chosen mystic path towards understanding religion. He, therefore, created his own corner of retreat in the *balandak*. It appears that for the different types of prayers, such as the common prayer (*salāt*), the supplementary prayer or supplication (*du'a'*), 'remembrance' (*dhikr*) and the inward prayers or converse with God (*munājāt*), Mubārak had different venues, depending on the particular type of meditation and the moods of performance. Likewise, it depended on the particular circumstances (hunger, night vigils, and silence) in which he wanted to bring his soul under control. As far as the *balandak* was concerned, apart from being a place of prayer, it also served as Mubārak's bedroom and personal office. The two remaining places for his meditation are *sang-i namāz* (a stone for prayer) and *chilla-khāna*, which are discussed alongside the applicable forms of prayer.

It is said that, contrary to the traditional Pamiri Ismā'īlī view of the *salāt*, which is performed three times per day, Mubārak believed in performing this common religious obligation five times per day, as required by the *Shari'at*. Although the fact of the Ismā'īlī-oriented and Sufi-minded personality of Mubārak is unquestionable, it is difficult to decide which particular school of law he was referring to when describing the *Shari'at* as the first step towards discovering the truth (*haqīqat*):

گر دل ز پی حقیقت آید      باید به ره شریعت آید  
سرمنزل از آن طریقت آید      بیرون نه از این حقیقت آید  
(MSS 08, 55a)

If the heart is after the esoteric truth,  
It must tread the way of the sacred law.  
Its destination is reached through esoteric path,  
Truth cannot be established save this way.

One way of approaching this issue is to focus on the Ismā'īlī hermeneutic idea of the *Shari'at*, as opposed to the traditional view of their being fixed schools of law. This is not to say, of course, that the

*Shari'at*, in the sense of religious law and regulations, loses its meaning for Mubārak; for he stresses the importance of observing some points of the *Shari'at*, such as *namāz* (prayer), *rūza* (fasting) and *zakāt* (religious taxation), three of the five 'pillars' of Islam. From the mystic point of view, however, in referring to the *Shari'at*, Mubārak draws attention to its inner or 'true' meaning, which, accordingly, is obtained through its hermeneutic method of interpretation (*ta'wil*) made by those who are 'the discoverers of the land of certainty' (*kāshif-i mulk-i yāqīn*) and 'well grounded in knowledge' (*rāsikhūn fil 'ilm*).<sup>27</sup> It is evident, in this light, that Mubārak is underlining an Ismā'īlī idea of the *Shari'at* based on the authoritative role of the Ismā'īlī Imam as the absolute interpreter of the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet. Moreover, each Imam is referred to as 'the Imam of the Time' (*Imām-i Zamān*) and 'the speaking' Qur'ān (*Qur'ān-i nātiq*) which allows them to make religious life more dynamic and relevant to the demands of the time in which they live. Hence, the idea of the perpetuity of the Imamate and the unquestionable and absolute religious authority of the Imam automatically dismantles the necessity of having a fixed religious law like the *Shari'at*. In the history of the Ismā'īlīs, except for rare cases of temporary concealment (*satr*), the Imams have always been present to deal with any kind of legal issues arising in the community. In their absence, this task was fulfilled by their agents, that is, *ḥujjats*, *dā'īs* and *pīrs*. From the historical point of view, on the other hand, the issue of the formation of a systematic Ismā'īlī jurisprudence was complicated due to certain political circumstances. Until the establishment of the Fātimid caliphate, the Ismā'īlīs did not have their own schools of law. During the Fātimid regime, one of the famous Ismā'īlī heroes, al-Qādī al-Nu'mān (d.974), who was the chief judge (*qādī al-quḍāt*) and the chief missionary (*dā'ī al du'āt*) of the caliphate, attempted to implement a new legal system in his *Kitāb al-Idāh* and *Dā'im al-Islām*, in which he used various Twelver Shī'ī, Sunni and Zaydī sources.<sup>28</sup> Yet, this did not produce a unique and systematic school of law. In practical terms, the later Ismā'īlīs, especially the Nizārīs of Alamūt, did not make much use of his books. They even managed to abolish the *Shari'at* during the Imamate of 'Alā Dhikrihi'l- Salām (d.1166) on

17 Ramadan 559 (1164).<sup>29</sup> Although the *Shari‘at* was again enforced by the next Imam, it failed to become a significant legal norm for the community. After the collapse of the Alamūt, the displaced and persecuted Ismā‘ilī communities had to act in accordance with the circumstance of their time and obey the laws of the countries in which they lived. As far as the Pamiri Ismā‘ilī idea of law was concerned, it was the obligation of the *pīrs* to regulate the community with certain moral and legal norms derived from the religious scriptures and interpreted in the light of the Imams’ *farmāns*, combined with indigenous ‘urf va ‘ādat (custom), but used in accordance with each *pīr*’s personal perception. Mubārak, thus, employed the idea of the *Shari‘at* in a more general sense, rather than to refer to a particular school of law.

The place where Mubārak performed the *salāt* is called *sang-i namāz*, a huge oblong stone, horizontally inclined to bridge the waterway flowing from the Sufi’s garden. Currently, this stone constitutes an important part of his museum-shrine and is regarded as a sacred altar by the local devotees.

The next and most important part of his spiritual meditation was the *dhikr*, a famous Sufi practice, which originates from the Qur’ān and prophetic tradition. It is said that the *dhikr*, which, together with its related forms, occurs 270 times in the scripture, is a prayer involving the repetition of the name(s) of God.<sup>30</sup> The *dhikr* largely means remembering God by mentioning his name and attributes. Nonetheless, this non-obligatory prayer, in the *Shari‘at* sense, tends to be a personal spiritual duty for Mubārak that differs in its context and extreme manner of performance. It is a constant and well-planned process of contemplation and remembrance of the Beloved, in which not only his names are mentioned, but also his mercy is begged, his attributes praised, and even sometimes serious dialogues (*munādhira*) take place. Likewise, the *dhikr* for him meant a way of preserving love in the heart as well as its constant enhancement. In the following verses from a *mustazād*, composed in dialogue form, this idea is clearly expressed:

گفتم ز پی حمد و ثناء دل به چه آموخت  
گفتا که خدا گوی

ناطق چه گرت دل پی تکرار برآمد  
 خود ورد زبان شد  
 گفتم که به یادت زنم این ورطه چه باشد  
 گفتا بکنم یاد  
 از ذکر گرت ناطقه هر بار برآمد  
 ذکر تو نشان شد  
 (MSS 09, 313a)

I said: “what should the heart be taught after praise and salutation?”

He said: “Just say, God!

If your speech is repeated in the heart,  
It will be expressed through the tongue”.

I said: “this whirlpool of lost is nothing with your remembrance”,

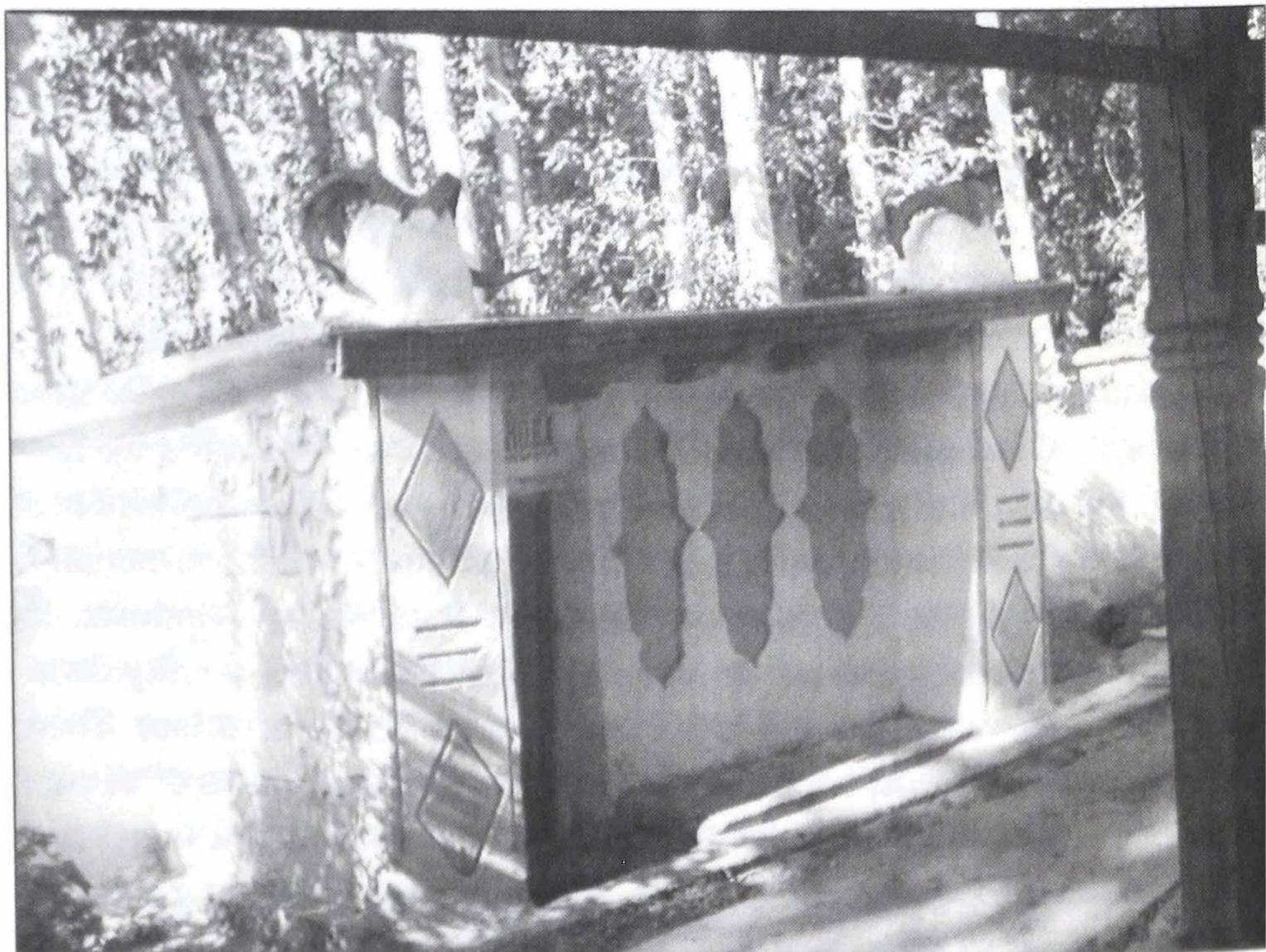
He said: “So remember me!

When *dhikr* is expressed through your speech every time,  
Then your *dhikr* is the signpost!”

Mubārak did express the *dhikr* in his poetry, most of which were composed during his practical observation of extreme asceticism performed in places of retreat specially made for this type of occasion, called *chilla-khāna* (the chamber of spiritual retreat), a cave-type cell used for the forty days of spiritual meditation (*chilla-nishīnī*) in the winter. The most extreme element of this type of mediation is probably the idea of the strict observation of certain rules laid down by Mubārak. Firstly, the *chilla-nishīnī* had to take place during the winter, exceptionally cold in Pamir, and secondly, the meditation had to be accompanied by fasting and the minimal use of food. Moreover, the spatial composition of *chilla-khāna* itself is extreme; it is a stone-built cabin in the mountains, measuring 1 × 0.5m, with a removable rock door, but no windows. Its simplistic construction is not comparable with the architecturally decorated *khānaqāh* (Persian), *takyan* (Turkish) or *zawiyah* (Arabic). There are three *chilla-khānas*, two of which are located on the banks of Yamg’s mountain river and the third in Mubārak’s private garden. The number of *chilla-khānas*, in agreement with the traditional accounts, thus suggests that he performed the act of *chilla-nishīnī* thrice. During those periods



5. Mubārak's Chamber of Retreat: *Chilla Khāna*.



6. The reconstructed *Chilla Khāna* next to the museum-shrine.

of extreme sobriety, Mubārak was not only busy with meditation, but he also completed some of his major works including *Khasf al-Salawāt*, *Hājāt va Munājāt*, *Tālib al-Matlub* and some other poems.

There seems to be a transitional phase between the second and third periods of Mubārak's spiritual progression referred to as a moment of anticipation (*muntazirī*). The impatient lover is told by his beloved to wait a year before his spiritual desire is fulfilled:

عمرم به نگاه طلب خانهء شصت است  
گفتا چه شد هفتاد  
سالی بتوان رفت که دلدار برآمد  
کاو منتظران شد  
(MSS 09, 314a)

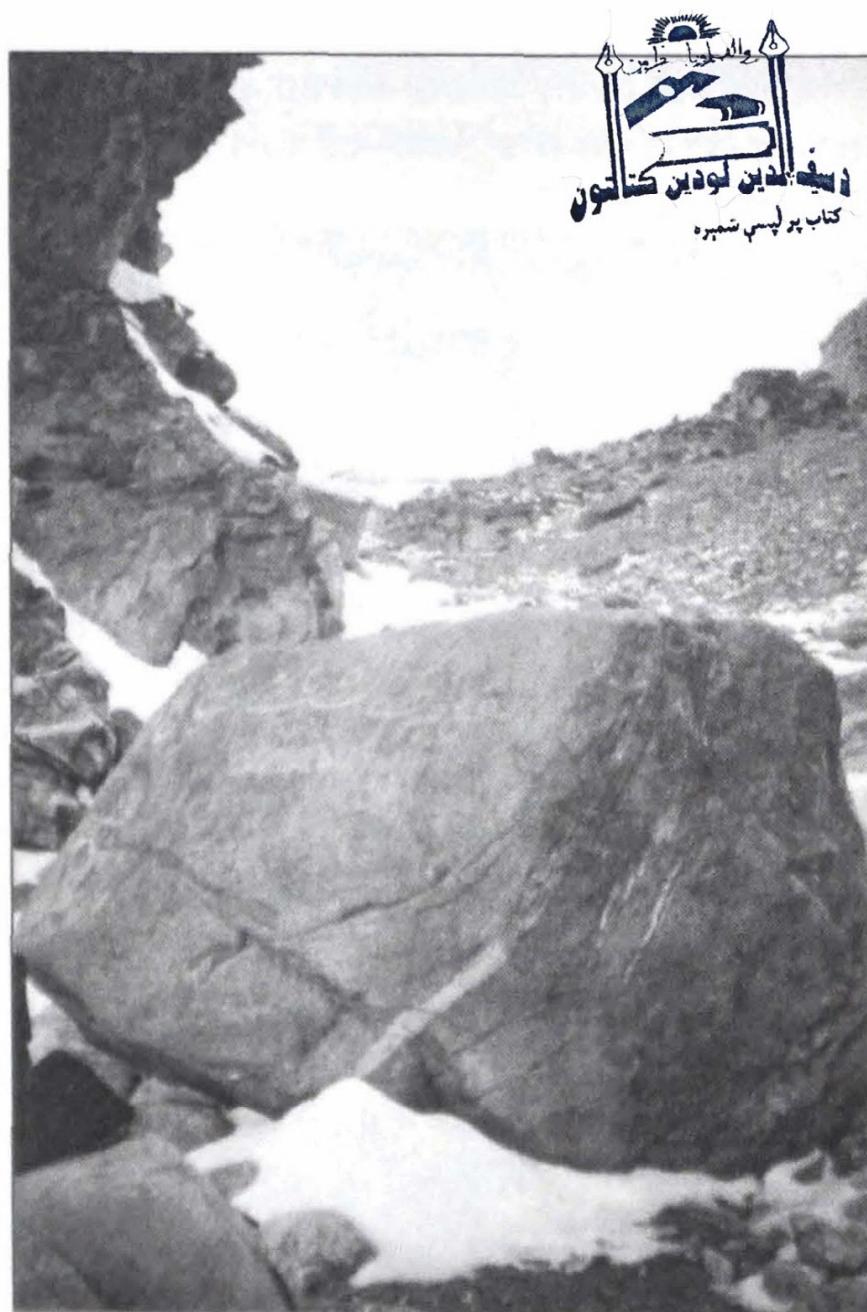
My life is in the doorway of the age of sixty,  
He said: "So what even if it is seventy,  
A year may pass until the Beloved unveils,  
So patience is needed!"

The third period of Mubārak's spiritual state was the shortest, but, as he himself asserts, the most joyful, resulting in him finding sobriety and patience. Chronologically, this period covers the ages sixty to sixty-four. In a self-addressed *ghazal*, on the one hand, he evaluates his life until the age of sixty as a period of negligence (*ghaflat*), and, on the other, he expresses a kind of realisation of spiritual satisfaction at the end of his spiritual journey:

عمریست به غفلتم در ایام گذشت شد بیست و سی و چیل چه پنجاه و چه شصت  
در شصت عنانی عمر بر تافتم برسوی علیم پاک صبرم بنشست  
(MSS 09, 29a)

Life has been passing in my negligence ever since,  
I became twenty, thirty, forty,  
What of fifty even until the age of sixty,  
At the sixty my egocentric life was lost,  
And towards the Pure Knowledgeable, I found my  
patience.

The determination of his spiritual journey and the realisation of peace in God are expressed in a most fascinating mystic way, resembling a well prepared romantic play, which is performed only for a single audience (i.e., the Beloved), whose satisfaction was his aim. While visiting one of the *chilla-khānas*, where he performed his last *chilla-nishīnī*, and its outskirts, I was struck by the geographic location of Mubārak's chosen place, in which a harmony between the objects of nature and expressions of thought is manifested. There is a narrow mountainous river (*dargāv*) in Yamg, naturally bordered by two-sided mountain embankments. The *chilla-khāna* is built on the left side of the river. On the top of the right side (some 2000m), between two high peaks, there is a large black rock, which symbolically resembles



7. "A doorway toward eternity"—Mubārak's stone inscription.

a signpost indicating the end of the path and, accordingly, one's journey. If one stands next to the rock and looks through these peaks, one can see nothing but the endless sky, as if it is inviting one to fly in order to feel its wholeness. To the mystic mind, it can resemble the ocean of divine unity in which he/she enters as a drop, but becomes the ocean. It is said that, at the end of his last *chilla-nishīnī*, Mubārak climbed up to that rock and on it designed the following verse, which remains preserved today:

گفتم که به خاک کویت بازم سر و جان

I said I will lose my head and soul in the dust of your path.

From the mystic perspective, this verse tends to define the limits of love by suggesting an ecstatic (*shāthiyyāt*) expression of the ending of a long quest for meaning and the realisation of the core Sufi idea of *wahdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being), when the lover finally realises



8. Mubārak's stone inscription enlarged.

his unity with the Beloved. After a long spiritual journey, the Sufi finally achieves this, when he sees no one, not himself, but God, in which the esoteric meaning of the *Shahādat* ‘there is no God, but God’ is fully expressed. Though nowhere is there a direct quotation by any particular Sufi regarding this issue in Mubārak’s works, it seems that he was influenced by such famous ecstatic expressions as al-Ḥallāj’ *Ana al-Ḥaqq* (I am the truth) or Bāyazīd’s *Subhānī* (Glory be to me), where an idea of the personal equivalent of divine essence is expressed.<sup>31</sup> A comparatively sophisticated ramification of this idea can be found in one of his *rubā‘īs*, where the idea of his personal unification with the Beloved and becoming like Him or just Him is explained:

زینسان نبود به جز مبارک رسدی  
نبود به میان اگر مبارک حسدی

عشق است روان اگر مبارک جسدی  
این جا همه تو تهی ز تو نیست یکی

(MSS 09, 359b)

Love is the soul, if Mubārak is its body,  
It therefore belongs to nobody, but Mubārak.  
There is only You, and nothing is empty from Your,  
Let there be no Mubārak, if he was jealous of it.

## 2.5. POET

Poetry was undoubtedly the most significant element in Mubārak’s life and career; it was the means of the expression of his cognitive imagination in a mystic system of thought. An examination of his poetic heritage indicates that he was an eminent master of poetry, well grounded in the art of Persian literature and professionally employed its various forms and styles in his works. Apart from *Hājāt va Munājāt*, which is written in prose, the rest of his works are poems. According to the data from Mubārak’s museum-shrine, his poetic legacy includes over 60,000 *bayts* (verses). Although instances of pseudo-epigraphy can indeed be found in the textual history of Mubārak’s works, sometimes it is difficult to decide whether the given number is accurate. It is a matter of concern for

two reasons. Firstly, as the plenary revision shows, there are some verses and lines in Mubārak's poetry that replicate themselves several times in various books. Secondly, there are many quotations from other poets in Mubārak's works, whose authorship are clearly indicated by him, but was most probably overlooked by the museum-shrine's research associates. In any event, the quantitative aspect of his poetry cannot dismiss its qualitative significance manifested in the variety of styles used and forms of the Persian-Tajik poetic tradition of the Islamic period. This tradition was greatly influenced by Arabic poetry and inspired by Islamic ideas, passed down through several historico-literary periods, each of which introduced certain stylistic innovations, such as the well-known styles or schools (*sabk*) of Iraq (*sabk-i Irāqī*), Khurāsān (*sabk-i Khurāsānī*) and India (*sabk-i Hindī*).<sup>32</sup> For our purpose, the latter style appears more appropriate than the former in both a stylistic and historical sense. From the seventeenth century onwards, the Tajik literature of Central Asia remained under the influence of the *sabk-i Hindī*, whose most famous representatives were Khusraw-i Dehlavī and Bīdil and which was distinguished from others styles by its complicated message expressed via symbols and hints in the poetry.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, this style is famous for its specific method of poetic professionalism expressed in writing logical 'answers' to other poets' work. If, for the sake of literary history, it is convenient to define Mubārak's poetry in the category of *sabk-i Hindī*, this does not necessarily mean that he was a complete poet of this style. The coexistence of various styles and forms in poetry is not a distinguishing feature of Mubārak's poetry, but it is relatively true for the poetry of modern times composed in Persian, Dari or Tajik. Despite their historic origins, these styles and forms were used side-by-side until modern time in all parts of the Persian-speaking world; the emergence of a new style could not ignore the importance of the former or outmoded Persian classicism. One of the technical reasons for the survival of classicism is probably because poetry in the Persian tradition is an art of mastering language and plying words, and a poet, as a professional artist, has to follow certain rules and the already accepted norms of poeticism embodied in its metric prosody (*vazn*) and rhyme (*qāfiya*). Mubārak, thus, as a poet of this poetic tradition, had to

modify his train of thought through these limitations and employ poetic forms such as *qaṣīda* (ode), *ghazal* (love, lyric poems, originally detached from *qaṣīda* by ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a of Mecca (d.715), *rubā‘ī* (quatrain), a pure Persian creation (Umar Khayyām), *qīṭā* (fragments) and *mathnavī*. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Mubārak’s poetic repertoire is dominated by some very rarely used poetic forms, for instance, strophic variations of *ghazal*, called *tarjī-band* (return tie), *tarkīb-band* (composite tie) and *mukhammas* (five-line verse, a type of *musammat* mastered by Manūchīhrī, eleventh century, and Qān’ānī, nineteenth century), as well as independent forms of *mustazād* (supplemented), *nāmaṭbu‘* and *tarjī-āt*. It is of considerable importance for the understanding of the structure of Mubārak’s poetry to give a brief survey of these poetic forms as they are accepted in Persian-Tajik literature.<sup>34</sup>

The rhyme pattern of the *tarjī-band*’s first four lines (*misra‘*) is like that of the *rubā‘ī* *a a b a* after which it continues *a b a b a b*, etc.; at the close of each strophe (*band*), the same verse is repeated. The *tarkīb-band* has a different rhyme (*qāfiya*) for each strophe and the concluding line of each also has a different refrain (*radif*). Contrary to ordinary *ghazal*, in both of these forms, the pen name (*takhallus*) of the poet is omitted. The *mukhammas* (five strophe) is also a long poem consisting of several five-strophes (*band-i panj-gāna*), with the same rhyme pattern (*a a a a a*), except the fifth lines of the succeeding strophes (*b b b b a* or *c c c c a* etc.), which is *ham-qāfiya* (equal rhyme) with the first line (*matlā‘*) of the first strophe. The *mustazād* (supplemented) has also the same metric pattern and rhyme as *ghazal*, but its characteristic difference is in the refrain of a short line followed by each *misra‘* in order to complete the sense. Likewise, the *mustazād* is longer than the *ghazal*.

What is particularly specific about Mubārak’s poetry is the occasional use of an unusual poetic structure called *mukhammas-mustazād*. Although it is a combined form of both *mukhammas* and *mustazād*, its metric pattern and rhyme differs from those two. The *mukhammas-mustazād* is a long lyric poem consisting of at least fifteen strophes, and each strophe, as with *mukhammas*, consists of five lines, but the fifth line of each strophe is short, resembling the completing line of a

*mustazād*. It serves as the concluding sentence of each idea presented in a strophe. Its rhyme pattern, except the first strophe, which is the same as that of *mukhammas* (*a a a a a*), differs from both the *mukhammas* and the *mustazād* formula (*b b b a b*, *c c c a c*, *d d d a d*, etc.) and differs in terms of each strophe; the refrain of each third line is the same as the first strophe. The other distinguishing feature of this form is that, in the last strophe (*maqta'*) a concluding message is addressed to the poet himself and his pen name (*takhallus*) is repeated thrice. As far as *mukhammas-mustazād*'s genre is concerned, it deals with the same themes as *ghazal* and *qaṣīda*; that is, the expression of morality, love (both divine and human), beauty, majesty, fear, repentance, hope, etc. In Mubārak's *mukhammas-mustazāds*, whose total number is seven (1305 verses), these themes are very strictly applied in the context of his personal perception of and relationship to the divine world that was firmly established in his imagination.

Thus, Mubārak was a highly talented poet who used various styles and forms of Persian-Tajik poetry to express his religious thoughts as well as the local Pamiri Ismā'īlī ideas. Nevertheless, the standard of his poetic professionalism requires further examination and evaluation by specialists in literary criticism. To attempt to offer a complete criticism of his poetic style and structure in the scope of this study would be not only presumptuous, but also contrary to the very intention of this work.

## 2.6. MUSICIAN

There are various types of Sufi or mystical oriented musical performances in the Islamic context that differ from each other in accordance with their texts, contexts, performances and musical contents. The most famous are *Mevlevī* (derived from Persian *Mavlavī*, a pen name of Rumi), which is mostly a Middle Eastern type, and *qawwālī*, a Sufi music of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>35</sup> In the general Western sense, the idea of Sufi music and even Sufism itself is understood in the context of the so-called ‘whirling dervishes’, whose famous musical performance (*samā'*), conveying an idea of the uniqueness of the universe and

its inhabitancy, symbolises a passionate way of each and everything's return to its origin. The idea of a return, expressed in musical terms via a musical instrument, originates in Rūmī's *Mathnavī*, where the *nay* (reed pipe) is employed as a symbol of loneliness, on the one hand, and the desire for unity, on the other.

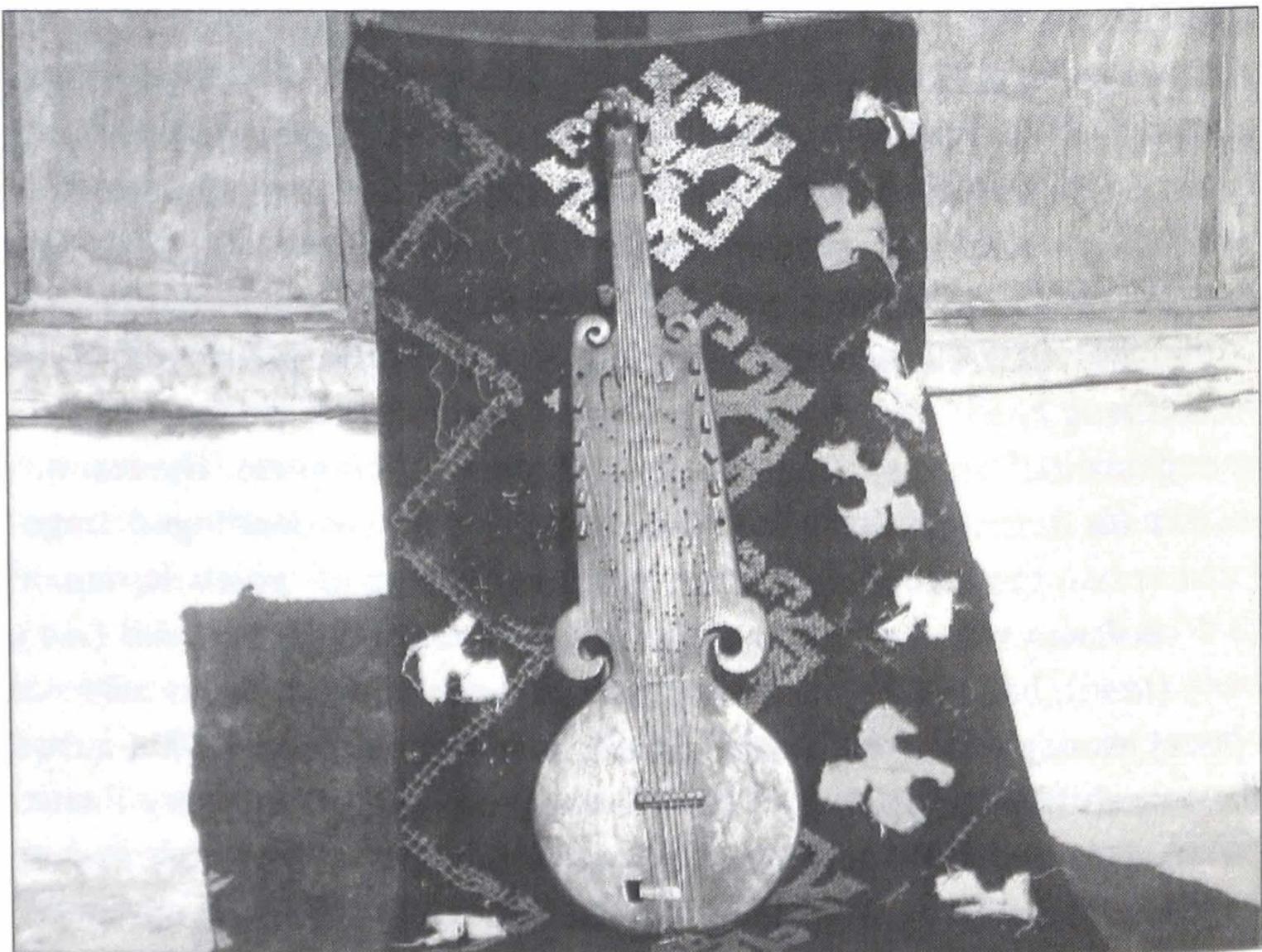
Mubārak, like many Islamic mystics, employed music as an alternative method of worship and devotion. His advantage, in this respect, was practically influenced by the musically favourable context of the dominating religious beliefs and practices of his time and place. One of the distinguishing features of his devotional music was, therefore, the harmonious use of indigenous musical tradition in a mystic context. In Pamiri Ismā‘ilism, music, which, in its vocal and instrumental forms, expresses religious ideas, has several names and forms of performance depending on a particular district, but conveying a common religious message. In the Shughnān and Rushān districts, it is the aforementioned *madō*, a localised version of the Arabic *madḥ* (praise); in Darvāz, where only some villages (Yāget and partly Shirāgvad and Qal‘a-yi Ḥusayn) profess Ismā‘ilī faith, it is called *haydarī*.<sup>36</sup> This term is derived from one of ‘Alī’s nicknames, *Haydar* (Lion), the one who bravely fought for the cause of Islam alongside with the Prophet. In Wakhān, Ishkāshim and some *Dari*-speaking parts of Afghan Badakhshan, it is called *qaṣā’id* or *qaṣā’id-khwānī*, a term derived from the single form of the Arabic *qaṣīda* (ode), and the Persian word, *khān* (to recite or sing). Although the repertoire of the *qaṣā’id-khwānī* does not necessarily contain only *qaṣīdas*, this term is traditionally taken to refer to this form of musical religious performance. One of the reasons for this name may be found in the very nature of the *qaṣīda* (lit. purpose), a long poem in mono-rhyme, meant to be sung or recited by a poet or a rhapsodist (*rāwī*). The diversity of names, nonetheless, does not affect the applied meaning behind this music. It is, therefore, worth nothing that one employs the later version to discuss the issue of mystic music in the region. Moreover, Mubārak himself defined this important part of his mystical performance as *qaṣā’id*. Several specific characteristics of the *qaṣā’id* music can be identified. Firstly, it is a combination of both joyful and solemn music, mostly performed in religious ceremonies,

especially at funerals. As far as the funerals are concerned, the *qaṣā’id*, as part of the ceremony, is not intended to express a sense of melancholy, but rather to celebrate the end of one’s physical life; to praise and thank the creator for one’s return to the origin: God. Secondly, its verbal content consists mainly of classical Persian poetry especially the works of Rūmī, referred to as Shams-i Tabrīzī, Ḥāfiẓ, Sanā’ī and ‘Aṭṭār. Thirdly, its rhyme and melody is created and supported by two archaic musical instruments: the *rubāb* (a six-stringed lute) and the *daf* (drum). There is no significant difference between the Pamiri drum, a round wooden entity called *sanj* (resembling a wheel) covered by an animal skin (usually goat), and other Central Asian forms of drum. Yet the Pamiri *rubāb* is unique in its form and melody; it is a wooden, short-necked musical instrument whose strings are made of sheep’s bowels and is played with a wooden plectrum.<sup>37</sup> The melody it produces is soft and usually played at a slow tempo in a hieratic atmosphere. The most important characteristic of the *rubāb* is its purely religious function. Contrary to the *daf*, the *rubāb* cannot be used in non-religious ceremonies or performances that do not contain elements of *qaṣā’id-khwānī*. Typified by *rubāb* and *daf*, *qaṣīda* is sung and played by professionals (*qaṣā’id-khwān*). Although the history of the *rubāb*’s construction remains obscure, traditionally it is believed that the first *rubāb* was made by Nāṣir-i Khusraw from a saddle of a horse belonging to the aforementioned Badakhshani prince, Jahān-Shāh.<sup>38</sup>

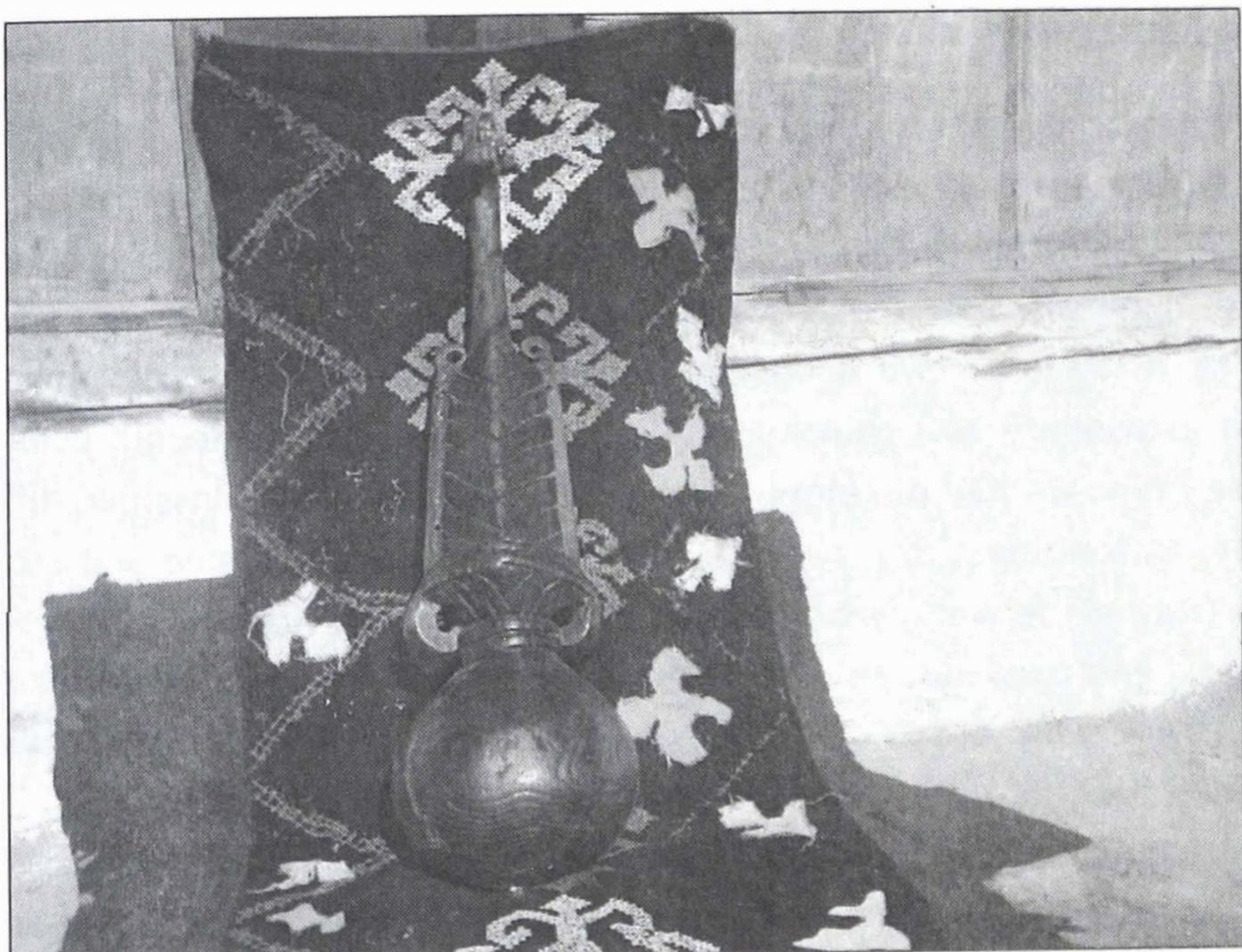
Mubārak was the inventor of a new type of Pamir *rubāb*, called the *baland-maqām* (lit. ‘high stage’), originally made for his personal use during meditation of, as he believed, ‘high stage’ importance. The *baland-maqām* (or *bulan-zukām* in the local usage) is a nineteen-stringed, huge-sized *rubāb* resembling a human form, each part of which is named in accordance with particular parts of the human body: the head (*sar*), body (*tana*), hands (*dast*) and ears (*gūshak*). The instrument is made of apricot wood, whilst its head is covered with goat’s skin. This is not the only difference between the *baland-maqām* and the ordinary Pamiri *rubāb*. The sound of the former is louder than that of the latter and its melody, produced by nineteen inner and outer strings, is of enormous passion. The original *baland-maqām* remains intact and well preserved

in the private collection of one of Mubārak’s great-grandsons, Lutfullah Zaraboev, in Yamg.

Thus, the religious as well as musical tradition of Pamir were in favour of Mubārak’s mystic life. The *qaṣā’id*, then, was his local means of Sufi devotional music, via which he performed the verbal (*jalī*) *dhikr* in both private and community ceremonies. It is said that he was one of the most talented *qaṣīda* singers (*qaṣā’id-khwān*) and *rūbāb* players (*mutrīb*) of his time, occasionally organising sessions (*mahfil*) of *qaṣā’id-khānī* in which he recited as well as taught young musicians his techniques for singing *qaṣā’id* and playing *rūbāb*. Many of his students then became famous throughout Wakhān and the neighbouring districts for their outstanding *qaṣīda* performances. For instance, it is told that one of Mubārak’s students, *khalīfa* Kārvān-Bek (d.1933) was an extraordinary *rūbāb* player (*mutrīb*) in the court of Zebāk’s *pīr*, Shāh ‘Abd al-Ma‘ānī.<sup>39</sup>



9. *Baland-maqām*, a musical instrument of religious importance.



10. The backside of the instrument.



11. Mubārak's great-grandson Zarabo with *Baland-maqām*.

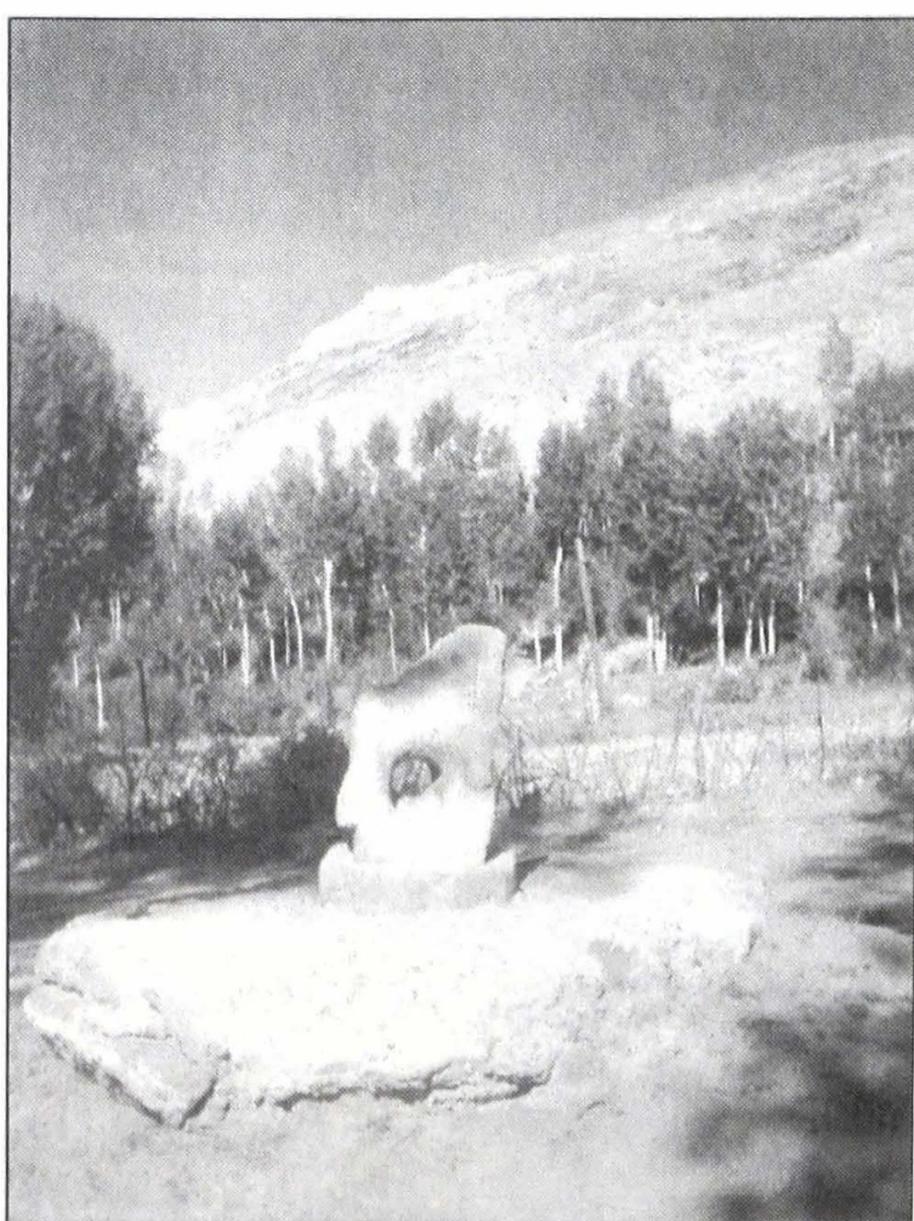
## 2.7. ASTRONOMER

Mubārak is thought to have adhered to a relatively scientific explanation of the structure of the universe and its rules. An examination of his works, especially *Risāla-yi Nujūm*, and an observation of his astronomic tools suggests that he possessed remarkable theoretical and practical knowledge of ‘ilm al-nujum (science of the stars), which included both astronomy and astrology. Although, since the thirteenth century, these branches had developed independently and were classified differently, astronomy (‘ilm al-falak) as a mathematical science and astrology (*tanjīm*) as a physical science, they have been applied in the same context and used side by side in the Islamic world up to modern times.<sup>40</sup> Mubārak’s knowledge of the stars and its application to the local context is, therefore, based on both of these premises.

In Pamir, a very restricted circle of religious scholars made use of the two most commonly accepted Islamic lunar (*Qamari*) and solar (*Shamsī*) calendars, but, in a general sense, these calculations of year have never had their full application in the regional context.<sup>41</sup> Traditional astronomy, which depended on the obvious visibility of the sky with no theoretic bases, was predominant in the region until the advent of the Soviet Union. There were several vernacular measures for the years, either derived from these two or originating from the pre-Islamic traditions. The implementation of the calendars was not a matter of everyday life, but merely connected with some certain significant socio-economic and religious events. For instance, the so-called ‘farmer’s calculation’ (*dīhqān-hisāb*) was mostly used in the agricultural sphere, especially during spring and autumn. According to it, the sowing season (*kisht*) was divided into seventy days of spring in each of fortieth, fiftieth, sixtieth and seventieth decades in which a particular crop was planted. The celebratory parts of the calendar were *Shāgun* (an equivalent of the Persian *Navrūz*), the beginning of the new *kisht* as well as the New Year, and the *Navī* or *Shigd-miy* (New Month), the start of threshing (*darav*) agricultural crops in autumn. All these elements of the *dīhqān-hisāb* remain in use in modern Pamir, especially in the agriculturally advanced districts.

The other calendar was literally based on the entire human body, according to which the days, month and years were counted from the toenails up to the head. The 365 days of the year were divided into ninety-four days of spring (*bahār*), ninety-three days of summer, including the two hot seasons of *tābistān* and *tamūs*, and eighty-nine days of autumn (*tiramāh*) and winter (*zimistān*).

Mubārak's astronomy seems to be a kind of popular version closely acquainted with the sun, moon and fixed stars. Yet he does propose conditions involving the apparent angular separation of the sun, the moon, the difference in setting times over the local horizons and the apparent lunar velocity. His solar method of observing the time in month and days is based on the so-called signpost (*nishān*) of theoretically calculated and practically positioned points in accordance with the local terrestrial latitude. In



12. Sang-i Āfāb-bīn, Mubārak's stone calendar in Yamg.

practical terms, Mubārak built a stone observatory consisting of two main parts; namely, the *Sang-i Āftāb-bīn* (the observation stone) and the *Sang-i Nishān* (the signpost stone). The former comprises an oblong stone with a large round hole in the middle located on flat ground. The latter resembles a stone window of 1.5 metres, positioned on the top of the hill, where the sun usually sets in the late afternoon. Although it is believed that Mubārak used this observatory to observe each solar month of the *Shamsī-hijrī*, its basic application is to determine the coming of *Shāgun* (i.e., Navruz) on the sixteenth through the eighteenth of March. For this, therefore, one must constantly observe the ‘motion’ of the sun through the observation stone until it appears in the hole as well as in the ‘window’. The observations prove the authenticity of the stone calendar every eve of *Shāgun*. The locals, therefore, continue to use the observatory in their modern lives.



13. *Sang-i Āftāb-bīn* in use.



14. Sang-i Nishān: The signpost stone.

## 2.8. PAPERMAKER AND PAINTER

Almost all of Mubārak's books were written on his own hand-made paper. He produced paper using a special machine called *dastgāh-i qāghaz-barār* (the paper-making tool). Unfortunately, this unique tool did not survive either in Mubārak's home or in St. Petersburg, where it was claimed to be preserved. According to Abibov, until 1970–1975, the paper-making machine remained intact in the private collection of Mubārak's grandson, Zarabo II (d.1989), and that he personally witnessed its existence.<sup>42</sup> However, subsequently, the machine mysteriously disappeared. Mubārak's relatives claim that it was removed by Russian scholars in the mid-1970s and may have been kept in the St. Petersburg's Hermitage. However, as the author's personal investigation shows, none of the state academic institutions and museums of St. Petersburg seem to

possess this historic tool. One may speculate that, if the aforementioned claim is true, then the machine must have been kept in a private collection of one of the former Soviet scholars visiting Pamir at the time.

Our only direct sources on the structure of the machine and the method of paper production are my interviews with Mubārak's grandson, Mubārak Qadam (named after his grandfather), and a 120-year-old witness, Jahān-Ārā (d.2004). According to these two interviewees, it appears that the machine consisted of four wooden counters stuck to a flat four angled stone with an iron mechanic tool in the middle and an animal horn probably serving as a pipe for transmitting the materials from which the paper was made. The paper materials included rice (*birinj*), cerulean (*ābsabz*), reeds (*qamish*), hair (*mūy*) and twigs (*shulmak*) from an apricot tree. Mubārak Qadam asserted that he had heard his mother (Mubārak's daughter-in-law) describe how she had participated in the process of preparing the raw materials for the paper. According to her testimony, first they had to mix the rice seeds with the aforementioned materials, feed them into the mill through a hopper and then grind them to a powder. Secondly, the powder needed to be fermented into dough and later divided into several small parts. Thirdly, the dough had to be flattened as far as possible to resemble a piece of paper. However, it was Mubārak's job to perform the final and most crucial process of the paper production, about which only he knew.

There are several poems in Mubārak's *Dīvān-i-Kulliyāt* regarding paper and its importance as a vehicle of preservation and transmission of one's ideas and thoughts. It seems that Mubārak was greatly preoccupied by the job of making paper and a philosophy that he attached to its production. He asserts that the desire to write enabled him to produce paper, a silent material, which, once covered with ink, becomes a spokesperson of one's thoughts, a scheme of one's mind:

دارم پی هوش و گوش کاغذ سر زد چه قدر خموش کاغذ	گر رفت ز دوش ما کاغذ دارد روشنی قلم مبارک
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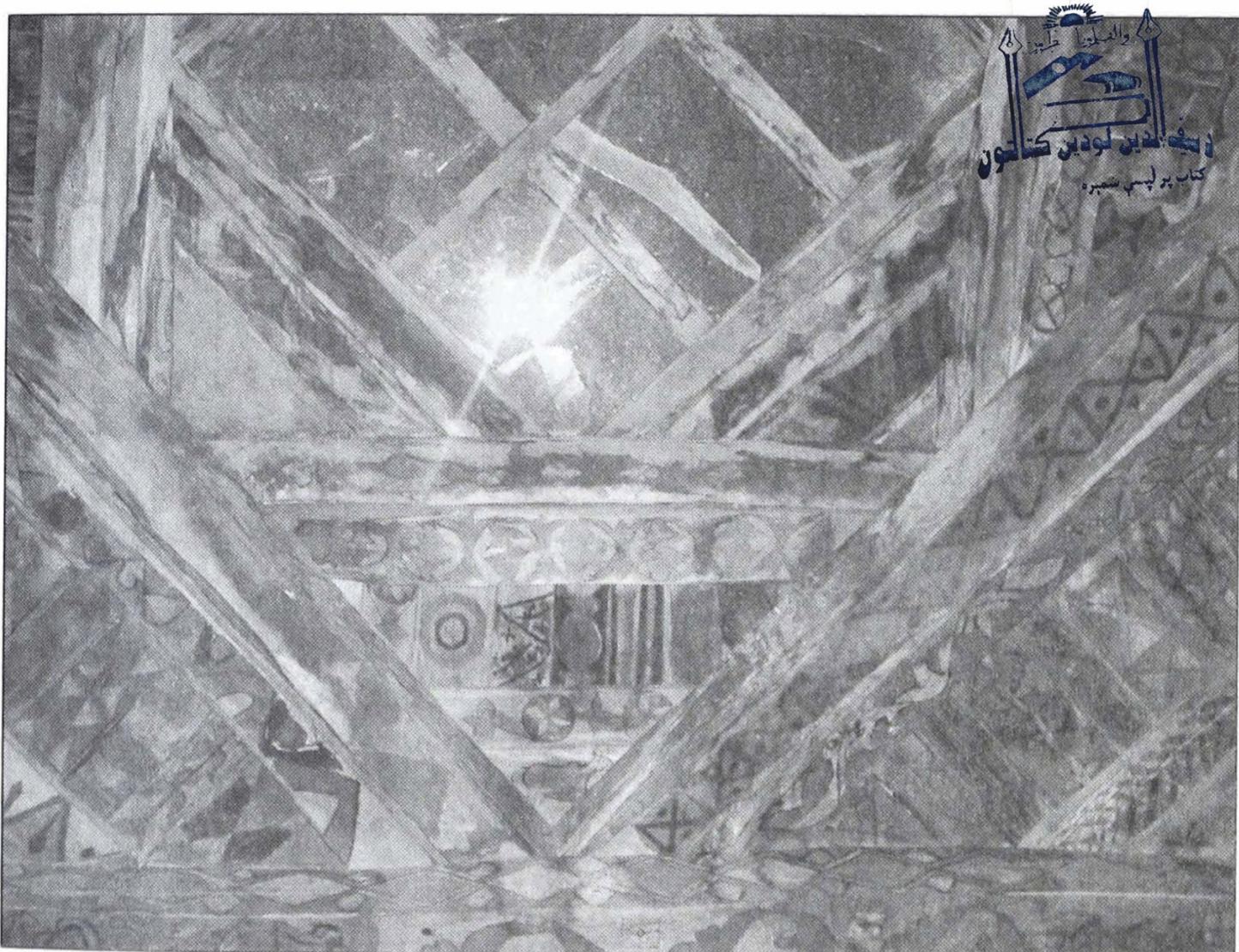
(MSS 09, 87a)

My senses and thoughts are preoccupied by paper,  
Though I am not concerned with it any more.

Mubārak longs to move his pen,  
For some silent papers to be revealed.

Mubārak's artistic designs are mostly demonstrated in the various forms of Islamic calligraphy and miniatures presented in his books. Likewise, he produced a unique and remarkable painting, preserved in a Pamiri House's corridor (*dālān*) in the Yamg village, which covers the whole of the corridor's ceiling. It is worth emphasising that, as an Islamic mystic, Mubārak's imaginative thought was undoubtedly circling around the already established grounds of symbolism in Islamic art. It is true that, by applying the adjective 'Islamic' to other aspects of a Muslim life rather than the faith, the issue of identity becomes complicated. Nevertheless, with the geographic spread of Islam in the culturally diverse and advanced lands of the Byzantine and Sāsānid empires, Central Asia and India, a unique type of art developed that came to be known as 'Islamic', expressed in calligraphy, abstract sculpture (the carving surface of the houses), geometric patterns and vegetal forms. This uniqueness, with regard to its specific regional and sometimes national characteristics, is clearly seen in Mubārak's works of art. Regarding calligraphy, Mubārak tends to use the two most famous Islamic styles of handwriting, namely *nasta'līq* and *naskh*, designed in a multicoloured frame in which the poem is printed. The line of the frame, which is usually divided into four sub-frames, is decorated with vegetable ornaments of different sorts and shapes. On the top of the first page of each manuscript, Mubārak draws a domed frame filled with the names of Allah, Muhammad and 'Alī, which, in a sense, combine Ismā'īlī symbolism: Allah as the symbol of the absolute being, Muhammad as the symbol of prophethood, and 'Alī as the symbol of the Imamate or *wilāyat*. Under the domed frame, there is usually a common Islamic expression: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, and the Merciful", which indicates the very fact that every poem that Mubārak had written was created in the name of God, relying on His compassion and mercy. Not every page or even book of Mubārak's manuscripts, however, is well decorated. Only the first and second, and occasionally the third and fourth pages, have well-designed structures. The most designed folios of his manuscripts

are as follows: in the *Kalām-i-Sa‘ādat* 2b, 3, 85, 90, in the *Hājāt* va *Munājāt* 78b, 79, in the *Qalb al-Ṣāfā’* 2a, 14, in the *Mujādila-yi-Iblīs* va *Ādam* 2b, 3, in *Kashf al-Ṣalawāt* 16, 63, 118, 122, in the *Dīvān-i Ash‘ār* 28a, 69a, 100, 116. In the *Tālib al-Matlub* (different from the *Hājat* va *Munājāt* copy), in addition to some decorated folios (2a, 3b, 4), the cover pages are also decorated. There are some very rare, but unusual features in this book that are neither seen in Mubārak’s other works nor anywhere else in the region. These images mostly come in single form on the cover page and the first page of the manuscript and do not resemble either vegetable or geometric patterns. For instance, on the first folio an image is drawn, which if one observes it horizontally, resembles a bird or insect about to take flight. The image is painted in dark red inside a triangular frame, whose front, which the bird faces, is open as it invites the bird to fly towards the free and only possible direction. It is almost certainly the case that, seeing a piece of artistic work from the point of view of its creator, is a very difficult task. One can only approximate the conditions which prevailed at the time of its creation. It is, therefore, an act of imagination to give a certain meaning to a piece of art in accordance with its cultural context. In accordance with Mubārak’s mystic imaginative thought, one can assume that the triangular frame symbolises the temporality of the physical world and its role as a gateway to the spiritual world, towards which the human soul seeks to travel in order to discover the source of eternity and perfection. In a general Sufi context, the birds symbolise different aspects of the human soul in its state of transformation or flight, which takes a mystic from of a lower stage of multiplicity to the higher reality of unity. In Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s (twelfth century) *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* (The Conference of the Birds), for example, various types of bird represent various aspects of the human soul that do not allow it to complete its mission.<sup>43</sup> In other words, there is a contradiction within the human soul. However, if the soul has a great desire for its journey towards perfection, then there is always hope, which is symbolised by the hoopoe, which guides the other birds or the inner aspects of human consciousness towards the *Sīmurgh*, or unity and perfection. The image of Mubārak’s bird does not exactly match any particular type of earthly bird, but is rather a mystical bird with two wings, each of which



15. *Naqsh-i Dālān* (Corridor Painting): The corridor's sunroof.



16. *Naqsh-i Dālān*: Decorated beams in the ceiling of the corridor.



17. *Naqsh-i Dālān*: Decorated beams in the ceiling of the corridor.

has extra feathers to make its flight faster. Its main corpus resembles the human heart, where probably lies its main engine, love, which enables the bird or the soul to fly faster to the source of love.

The painting on the corridor ceiling of the aforementioned Pamiri house is undoubtedly the most intricate and important piece of art ever created by Mubārak outside his retreat. It is worth emphasising that this one-hundred-and-eleven-year-old work of art has no known equivalent anywhere in Pamir. Although Mubārak does not give any particular name to his work, in general local usage it is referred to as *naqsh-i-dālān* (the corridor decoration). This title does indeed unify the elements of the other art forms (calligraphy, carpentry and architecture) presented in the work, predominantly painting, and harmonises the relationship between the various types of abstract and concrete objects. Chronologically, the

*naqsh-i-dālān* was created in 1892 (1310), of which Mubārak's own handwriting in one of the corridor's pillars testifies:

کشیدم چند حرف مشقیانه بماند یادگار هر زمانه  
هزارو سه صد و ده بود و گفتم که در ماه صفر ماند نشانه

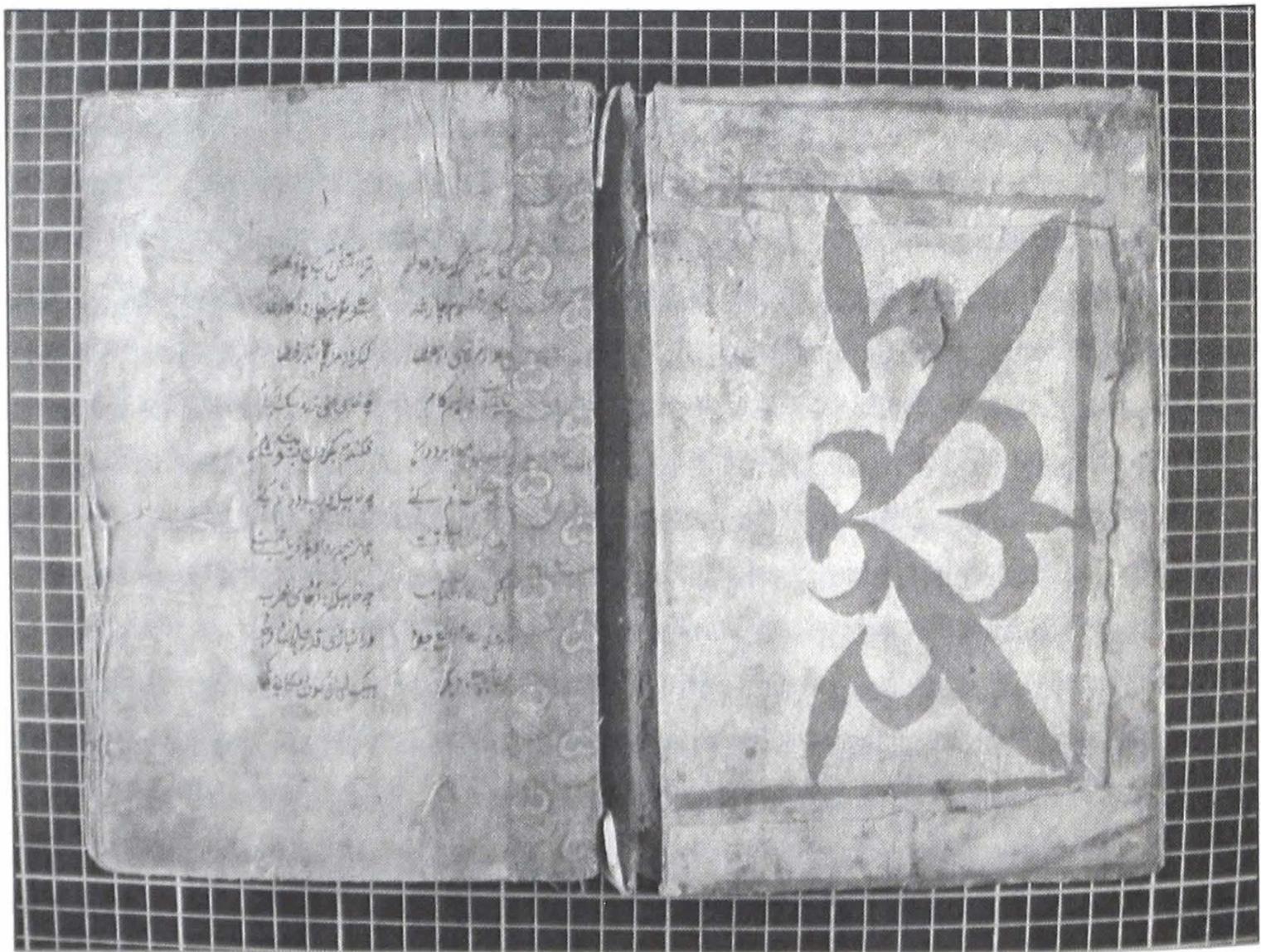
I drew some letters out of exercise,  
To be remembered in every age.  
I said it was one thousand three hundred and ten,  
The month of Safar to be the omen.

In accordance with the chronology of Mubārak's spiritual progress, the painting fits with his second period, the climax of his intoxication (*mastī*), when the desire for the spiritual vision (*dīdār*) of the beloved brought him to a dichotomous situation filled with the sense of fear on the one hand, and hope on the other. In the painting, therefore, we observe several mythic images associated in the local tradition with devils (*dīv*) and demons (*jinn*), which symbolise the idea of the fear that those making the journey to God face. Mubārak argues that the lover has to face all the consequences of walking in the path of love prior to the journey. Nonetheless, the presence of the perilous images does not dominate the entire work, but, on the contrary, is suppressed by the more colourful and beautiful images symbolising hope and goodness, love and passion, in entering the gateway on the journey to God. The positive images are mostly represented in the form of concrete physical objects, such as the sun, different types of animals and trees, flowers as well as human beings.

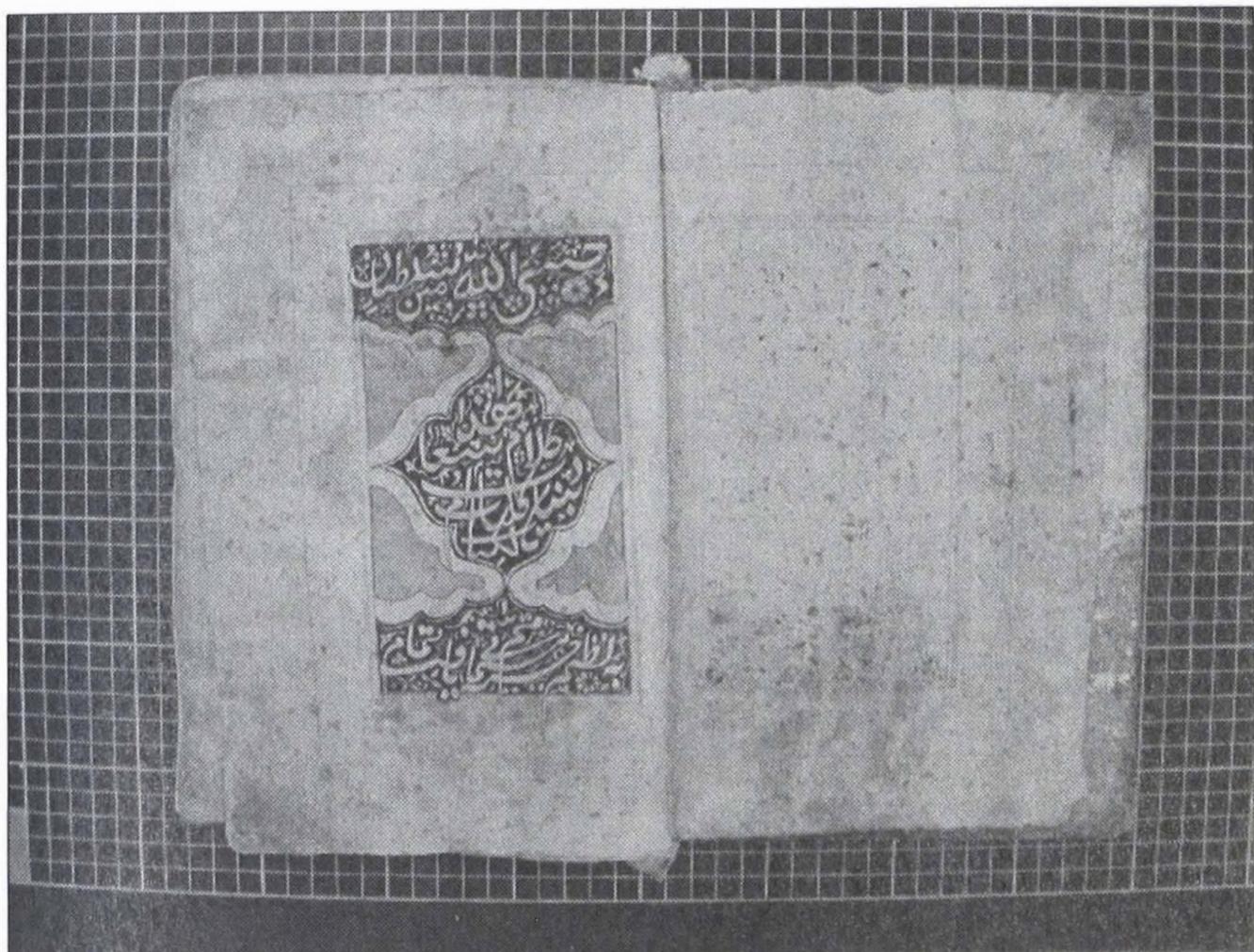
Likewise, besides the mystic expression, the painting also has a purely realistic motive concerned with the celebration of the construction of a house for the newly appointed *qāḍī* (judge) Ghulāmnabī, in favour of whom Mubārak once rejected the offer of this position by the Wakhān's *nā'ib* (a local representative of Afghan authorities after the occupation). In the left corner of the ceiling, we read a verse probably written by the *qāḍī* in praise of the Afghan king, 'Abd al-Rahmān. The poetic structure of the verse is poor and it seems reasonable, therefore, merely to summarise its message. The verse is a self-addressed panegyric *qit'a*

(fragment) in which the *qādī* is encouraged to take pride in serving such a ‘chivalrous’ (*javān-mard*) king as ‘Abd al-Rahmān. Astonishing as this may have sounded to an ordinary Wakhī at the time of the Afghan occupation, this politically correct fragment allows us to imagine the extent of the terror that the Afghans had spread in the villages of Wakhān, on the one hand, and the locals’ political inability to negotiate this, on the other.

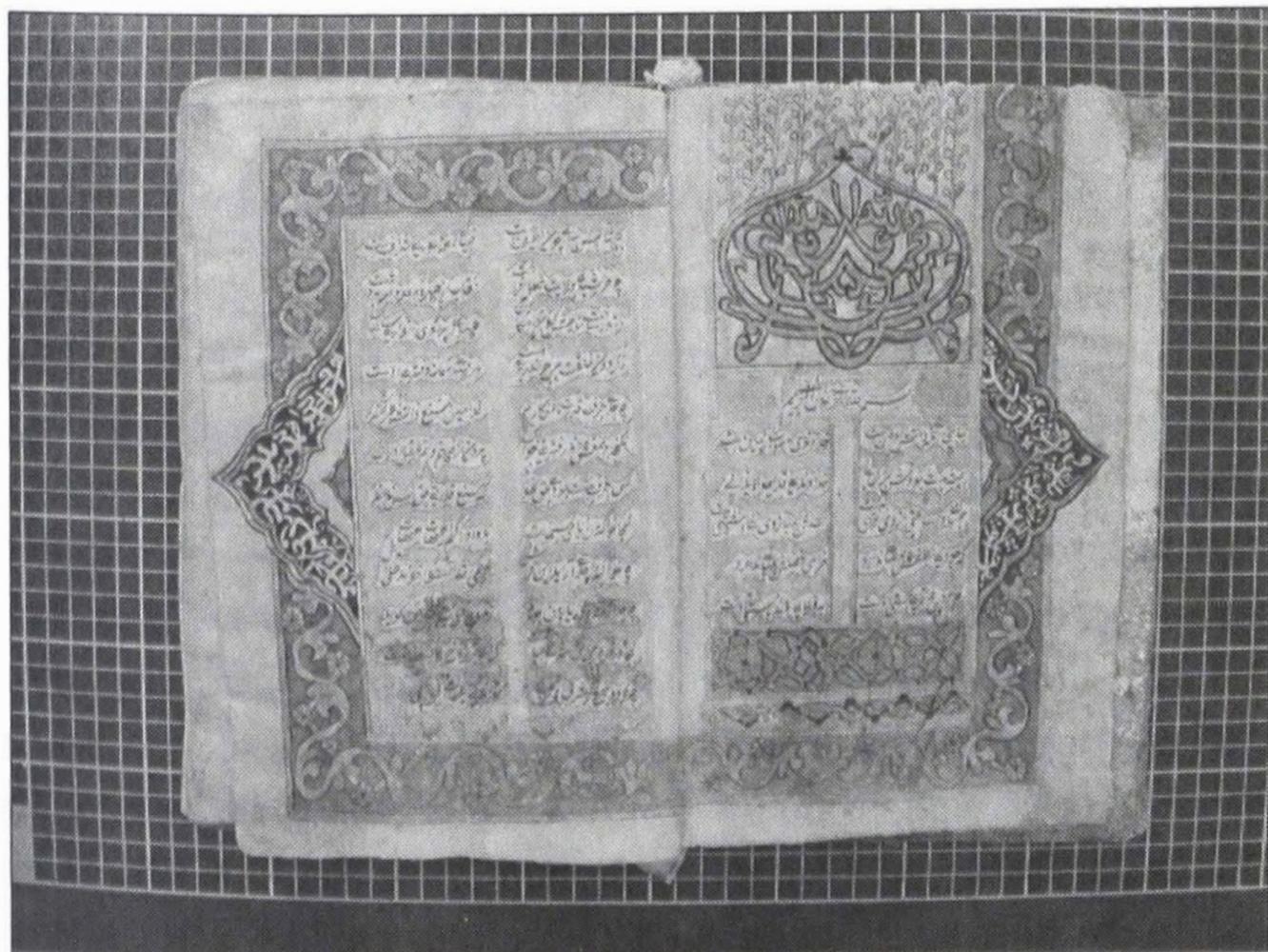
Thus, the *naqsh-i dālān*, as a unique masterpiece in nineteenth-century Pamir, constitutes Mubārak’s finest work, in which the harmony of the various art forms, including painting, calligraphy and carpentry, are combined to illustrate not only his personal mystical imagination through abstract objects, but also to indicate one of the most important historical events of his time: the Afghan occupation.



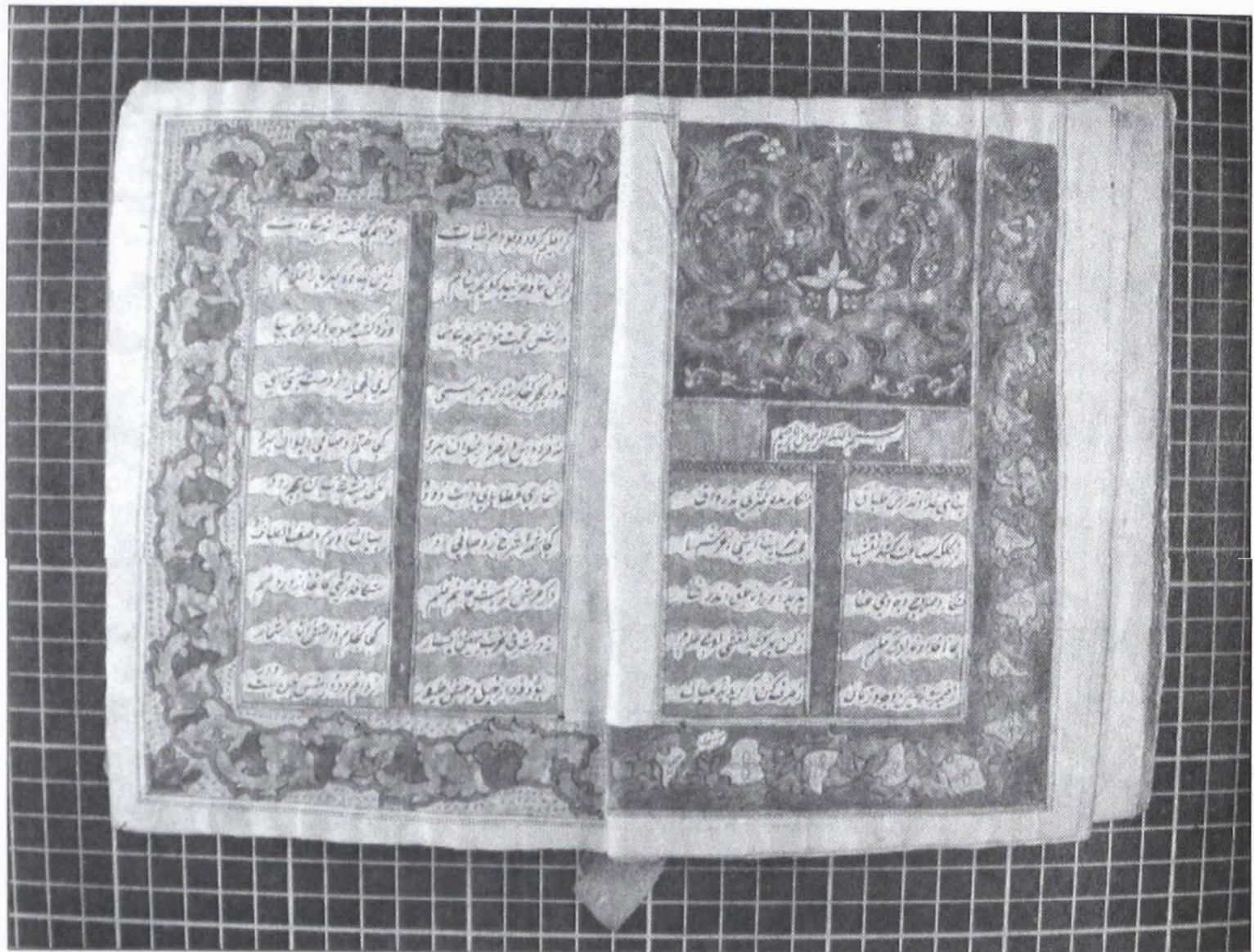
18. “The flight of soul”—a symbolic image from the • *ālib al-Matlūb*.



19. The format of the first pages of Mubārak's manuscripts: An example of the *Kalām-i Sa• ādat*.



20. Some illustrated folios from the *Kalām-i Sa• ādat*.



21. Some illustrated folios from the *Kalām-i Sa• ādat*.

## 2.9. MUBĀRAK’S PERCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

As mentioned in chapter 1, from the historical point of view, the nineteenth century made a dramatic impact in every sphere of the Pamiris’ lives. Although religious life, in the sense of belief and the forms of religious rituals, continued as before, the authoritative role of the *Panj-Tanī* faith, as the only religion in the entire region, was seriously challenged, especially by the Sunni branch of Islam. It is true that the Russians did not explicitly implement a policy of religious conversion, but the Sunni Afghans and the *Bukhārīs* (in the Russian parts) did seek to impose the *Hanafī* school of Sunnism on the Pamiris. As a result, an entire valley in the Russian-occupied territories, *Yazgulām*, was converted to Sunnism. In the Afghan parts of *Shughnān*, *Ishkāshim*, *Wakhān* and some other *Ismā‘ilī* populated regions, the Sunni *Hanafī Sharī‘at* was imposed and the

Ismā‘īlīs, despite their doctrinal principles, were required to obey the new regulations. Likewise, this policy affected the demographic situation in Pamir; once a homogenous Ismā‘īlī region, it started to be populated by the Sunnis, either by force or through buying the land of the locals. This situation consequently created a hostile atmosphere of sectarian hatred and disputes, in which both sides were seeking to prove ‘the authenticity’ of their perception of Islam. If, for the Sunnis, it was a matter of imposing their lifestyle on the occupied land, then, for the Ismā‘īlīs it was more concerned with personal survival and the preservation of their religious creed.

As an intellectual representative of his time, Mubārak was deeply concerned with the issue of sectarian hatred and aimed to play the role of peacemaker between the two religious groups. He addressed not only militant Sunnis who were accusing the Pamiris of heresy, but also the orthodox Ismā‘īlīs, who regarded Ismā‘īlism as the only true faith. In order to reconcile the polemic arguments of both sides, Mubārak suggested that they should discuss the issue in the light of the common monotheistic religious principle that anyone who recognises the oneness of God is not an infidel, and that both Ismā‘īlīs and Sunnis believe in the same God (Allah) and the Prophet Muhammad as the last messenger of Allah. Likewise, regarding infidelity as a sign of ignorance (*zulmāt*), he persuaded both groups to make personal judgements prior to their sectarian accusations. He strongly believed that if one destroys the evil of hatred within oneself first, then one can see and appreciate the positive qualities in others. In the—*Tarjamat al-Bayān*, he asserts that, contrary to infidelity, Islam is a religion of enlightenment and that one should not seek the personal faults of others in terms of the way in which they believe in Islam:

یکی ظلمت و دیگری نور بین ترا کور بر عیب خود چشم جان کاز اول توان کشت کفر وجود	بود کفر و اسلام معنا همین تو بینایی بر عیب از دیگران نشاید مبارک بدی کس نمود
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(MSS 06, 45)

The meaning of infidelity and Islam is thus:  
 One is darkness, the other enlightenment.  
 You are sighted to notice the faults of others,

But the eye of your heart is blind to see your own fault.  
 You must not, O Mubārak, do bad to others,  
 But be able to kill your self-evil first!

Likewise, and with greater simplicity, Mubārak argues that one of the main roles of religion, apart from its spiritual dimensions, is to unite people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the principle of the oneness of God. This solution was based on his mystic idea of the unity in the midst of every multiplicity, relating not only to Islam, but also the two other forms of Abrahamic beliefs; namely, Judaism and Christianity. Recommending various ways of approaching, worshipping and understanding the one and only God, he strongly condemns the idea of the true religion as the only way to the ultimate truth. Accordingly, the true religion is the one that not only insists on its idea of truthfulness, but also, despite doctrinal differences, tolerates the ways of the other faith as an alternative path of attaining truth. All these religions for him share the same source and deliver the message of the one God. In the following verses, Mubārak stresses the historico-cultural fact that the holy books of the Abrahamic religions, in one or other way, convey the same wisdom in the form of stories and tales:

حقیقت یکیست معنا ز چار  
 چوتورات و انجیل و فرقان بود  
 زکونیت دهر چرخ و مدار  
 ستایش زبور و تورات نعمت

یکی دان خدا و گر نطق چار  
 کتاب خدا نطق یزدان بود  
 زبور است نطق خدا این چهار  
 در انجیل حکمت به قرآن صفت

(MSS 06, 35)

Know that God is one, though his speech is four,  
 The truth is one, though the meaning is four.  
 The book of God is the divine speech:  
 The Torah, the Bible and the Qur’ān.  
 The Psalms is the Speech of God, being the fourth,  
 From the creation of the celestial spheres and the orbit.  
 In the Bible the wisdom is likened to the Qur’ān,  
 Wherein the Psalms is praised and the Torah  
 is complimented.

In the next poem, he aims to admonish his audience about the necessity of following God's will (*amr*) as the key to understanding truth. Being a Muslim himself, Mubārak truly rejects the common Muslim belief that paradise is only for the community (*ummah*) of Muhammad. On the contrary, he argues that any religious community that obeys the will of God, as related through their prophets, will return to God and find peace in His paradise:

که حق بهر امّت محمد سرشت ربود امر آن کاو بهشت است از آن وجودش پی امر حق رد بود چو بوجهل گر باشد اکبرترش <sup>44</sup> گر امّت ز عیسی است فرمان روا ز فرمان ستاند بهشت خدا	نه آن است اندر حقیقت بهشت بهشت است از بهر فرمانبران چو گر امّتی از محمد بود خدا زاوست بیزار و پیغمبرش
---	--

(MSS 06, 53)

In truth, there is not a paradise,  
 Which God created only for the community of Muhammad.  
 Paradise is for the obedient people,  
 He, who obeys command, goes to paradise.  
 Even if there is a follower of Muhammad,  
 Whose being rejects God's commandment,  
 God and the Prophet are exasperated with him,  
 Even Abū Jahl is higher than him.  
 If a follower of Jesus is obedient,  
 With commandment, he will accomplish God's paradise.

Finally, the principal positive act most strongly advocated by Mubārak is that, if one is very determined in one's quest for God, as an object of hope (*āmil-i bardī*) and the means of spiritual satisfaction towards the ultimate perfection; then, there is no need to divide Him into the gods of Zoroastrian, Christianity or Islam. This is because multiplicity is not the essence of God, but rather His attributes and names, which must not dismiss the very fact of His unity. The true seeker of the divine essence, therefore, should note that God is wherever and whenever he wants to look for Him. In a fascinating verse (from a *ghazal*), Mubārak says:

چو پیدا و نهان یار است و یار است بر از دیر مغان یار است و یار است	اگر مستور گردد آشکارا به کعبه جوی گر مسجد به اقصی
--	--

(MSS 09, 37a)

If the divine concealment discloses,  
Whether hidden or unveiled, the beloved is the beloved.  
Whether you seek in the Ka‘ba, at the mosque of al-Aqṣā,  
Or in the temple of the Magi, the beloved is still the beloved.

Hence, at the heart of Mubārak’s tolerance of religious diversity lies a belief in the universality of God, as a unique, common object of piety and spiritual desire. Emphasising the unity of God, he argues that there are various ways to approach and believe in God, but God, as such, is the One and only for all believers. In a sense, he imagined God as a suprasensory power standing in the middle of the universe, thereby being approachable from any possible direction and through any possible idea, provided it is divine and sacred, since all of these approaches will finally lead to the centre. Mubārak, therefore, strongly condemned those who claimed the authenticity of their methods for approaching and understanding God and regarded it as a sign of ignorance.

## ENDNOTES

1. For the geopolitical history of Pamir during the Anglo-Russian conquest, see Leyonid Kharyukov, *Anglo-russkoe soperничество в Средней Азии и Исламизме* (Moscow, 1995). Aleksey Postnikov, *Skhvatkа na 'Krishe Mira': politiki, razvedchiki i geografi v borbe za Pamir v xix veke* (Moscow: Pamyatnik istoricheskoy milsi, 2001).
2. Sulaymān and Fitur-Shāh, *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*, 23.
3. Badakhshī and Surkhafasr, *Tārīkh-i Badakhshān*, 29. For the chronological development of that period, see Iskandarov, 43–98.
4. For the history of Badakhshan rubies, see Mira Bubnova, “Rudnik Kukhi Lal. Iz istorii badakhshanskikh lalov” *Materialnaya kultura Tadzhikistana* 2 (Dushanbe, 1971).
5. The aforementioned *pīr*, Sayyid Yūsuf ‘Alī Shāh, in his interview with Aleksey Bobrinskoy, asserted that there were 6 Ismā‘īlī and 30 Twelver Shī‘ī households in Yazgulām in the early twentieth century. For more details, see Aleksey Bobrinskoy, *Sekta Ismailiya*, 8–10.
6. For the Fātimid hierarchy of the *da‘wa*, see Abbas Hamdani, “Evolution of the Organisational Structure of the Fātimid Da‘wa” *Arabian Studies* 3 (1976): 85–114. Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdī: The Rise of the Fātimids* (Leiden, 1996). Wladimir Ivanov, ed., *Kalām-i Pīr*, 58, 64, 68 93, 101, 103.
7. Although *mustajīb* is usually referred to a novice initiated to a religious path, here it defines the status of a very learned and pious devotee, whose position in the hierarchy is higher than that of the ordinary *muriđs*.
8. Aleksey Bobrinskoy, *Sekta Ismailiya*, 10, 12, 16.
9. These verses are part of the famous *qaṣīda* by Rubābī sung in the local musical and devotional ceremony of the *madō-khānī*.
10. For more details, see Mikhail Andreyev, *Tajiki doliny Khuf* (*verkhov'ia Amu-Dar'i*): *Tojikoni vodii Khuf* (*sargahi dar'yai Amu*) (Stalinabad: Akademiiia nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR, 1953), 183.
11. Ivan Minaev, *Svedenie o stranakh po verkhovyam Amu Dari* (1879), 47.
12. This story was recorded in March 2003 from ninety-nine-year-old Jumaqul Davlatqadamov, who reports having heard it from his uncle, qāḍī Khujam.
13. Mikhail Andreyev, “Materiali po istorii i etnografii iranskikh plemyon Sredney Azii: Ishkashim i Wakhan”, *Sbornik muzeya antropologii i etnografii* 9 (1911): 8–9.

14. Interviews on this subject were recorded in February 2003 from Mubārak's grandson, Mubārak Qadam Bandishoev.
15. It is worth noting that in Afghan Badakhshan, the custom of 'child marriage' is still observed.
16. Wladimir Ivanow, *A Forgotten Branch of the Ismailis*, 60–62.
17. This story was recorded in March 2003 from Jumaqul Davlatqadamov and 120-year-old Jahān Ārā in the Yamg village. She was originally from Afghan Wakhān (Yazuk village) and married a man from the other side of the river before the demarcation of Pamir into Afghan and Russian sections. She died a year after this interview.
18. To date, the term *avlād* (originally in Arabic meaning 'offspring') in the context of Wakhān is usually used to refer to a family clan consisting of several other families, whose first ancestor (*bābā* or *pup*) of the seven generations (*pusht*) is the same person. In addition to the term *avlād*, sometimes the term *kutār* is also deployed to refer to a family clan.
19. This story was recorded in July 2003 in Yamg from Mamadbek Qurbonov, the village's *khalīfa*.
20. For more details on *da'wat-i baqā'* see Elbon Hojibekov, "Rājī' ba yak Sunnat-i Mazhabi-yi Mardum-i Badakhshan" in *Nāṣir-i Khusrāw: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, Sarfaroz Niyozov and Ramazon Nazriev (Khujand: Nāshir, 2005), 605–610.
21. Amirkbek Abibov, "Mullā Shamshīr" in *Ganj-i Badakhshān* (Dushanbe: Irfān, 1972).
22. For more details, refer to Ravan Farhadi, "The Hundred Grounds of Abdullāh Ansārī of Hirāt (d.448/1056): The Earliest Mnemonic Sufi Manual in Persian", in *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origins to Rumi (700–1300)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: One World, 1999), 381–400.
23. *Jām-i Jam* is referred to the grail or cup (*jām*) of the pre-Islamic Iranian mythological figure, Jamshīd, the primordial ancestor of the Iranian people. It is traditionally believed that the grail (*jām*), sometimes referred to as mirror (*ā'iṇa*), had a magic power to show the world and its events whenever Jamshīd wanted to. The *Jām-i Jam* is also called 'The World Reflecting Mirror' (*ā'iṇa-yi jahān-namā*) and 'Alexander's Mirror' (*ā'iṇa-yi Sikandar*). In Islamic mysticism it symbolises the Perfect Man (*Insān-i Kāmil*), the wise and knowledgeable human being, who has reached the court of God and knows the secrets of both worlds.
24. From an interview with Mamadbek Qurbonov, recorded on February 23, 2003.

25. This description was given by the aforementioned interviewee, Jumaqul Davlatqadamov, who heard it from his grandfather, Kārwān II (d.1933), one of Mubārak's cousins.
26. With regard to the linguistic diversity of Pamir, there are various terms employed to describe the particular parts of Pamiri house in the region, which completely differs from those of Wakhī used here.
27. The notion of *ta'wīl* has dichotomous applications in the diverse context of Islam. For the majority of the Muslims (mainly the Sunnis) it simply means interpretation, an equally with *tafsīr* science of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* exegesis. Derived from the verb *awwala* (lit. bringing something to its origin), *ta'wīl* is several times deployed in the Qur'ān in the senses of the ultimate outcome (4:59; 17:35; 7:35; 10:35), interpretation of dreams (12:6, 21, 36, 37, 44, 45, 100, 101) and interpretation of the *mutashabbih* (ambiguous) verses (3:7, 18:78, 82). However, in the Shī'ī, especially in the Ismā'īlī context, *ta'wīl* has a very significant role in deriving the inner (*bāṭin*) meaning of the Qur'ān and its practical applications. According to the Ismā'īlīs the 'owner' (*sāhib*) of *ta'wīl* is the Imam of the Time (*Imām-i Zamān*), who believed to posses the divine science of *ta'wīl* ('ilm al-*ta'wīl*). This belief is usually justified on the basis of the Qur'ān (3:7), where it says that "no one knows *ta'wīl* except God and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge (*rāsikhun fī al-'ilm*)". The early Ismā'īlīs even referred to themselves as the people of *ta'wīl* (*ahl al-*ta'wīl**). '*Ilm al-*ta'wīl** as a science of esoteric exegesis was developed by such eminent Ismā'īlī thinkers as Abu Yaqub Sijistānī, Mansur al-Yaman, al-Qādī al-Nu'mān, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, al-Mu'ayyad fī al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, Nāṣir-i Khusraw and many others.
28. For some aspects of the Ismā'īlī law, particularly during the Fāṭimid period, see Ismail Panawala, "Al-Qādī al-Nu'mān and Ismā'īlī Jurisprudence" in *Medieval Isma'ili History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 86–101.
29. For more details on this case and the *qiyāmat*, see Journn Buckley, "The Nizārī Ismā'īlites' Abolishment of the Sharī'a During the 'Great Resurrection' of 1164 A.D/559" *Studia Islamica* 60, 137–165.
30. William Chittick, *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: One World, 2001), 53.
31. For these ecstatic expressions, see Reynold Nicholson, *The Idea of Personality in Sufism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 35–51.
32. For periodisation of Persian poetry, see Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (D. Reidel Publication Company: Dordrecht, 1968), 115–119.

33. Jiri Becka, “Tajik Literature from the Sixteenth Century to the Present” in *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Karl Jahn (Dordrecht, 1968), 497.
34. This survey is based on several sources, such as Edward Browne, *Literary History of Persia* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd, 1915). Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968). Yūsuf Akbarov, *Shīr-i Ihsās va Tafakkur* (Dushanbe: ‘Irfān, 1985).
35. For a detailed accounts of these types of Sufi music, see Jean During, “What Is Sufi Music?” in *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150–1500)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, (Oxford: One World, 1999), 277–287.
36. For a case study of the Pamiri devotional songs and musical instruments, refer to Gabrielle Van Den Berg, “The Performance of Poetry and Music by the Ismā‘ilī People of Badakhshan: an Example of Madāh from the Shahdara-valley”, *Persica* 15 (1996), 49–76.
37. For a detailed description of the Pamiri rubāb and its various types, see Jan Van Belle, “The Music of Tajik Badakhshan”, *The Ismaili of the United Kingdom* 33 (December 1998), 18–19.
38. Rahmanqulov, *Bahr al-Akhbār*, 33.
39. To date, *pīr* ‘Abd al-Ma‘ānī, who, with the blessing of the Afghan authorities, controlled the most strategic borders with India (Chitral) from Sanglīj to Dāra, was appointed by the Aga Khan III as the chief *pīr* of the entire Badakhshan and Pamir, and was in charge of the region’s *māl-i sarkār* (religious tax). For more details about him, see Kharyukov, 135–148.
40. For the early history of Islamic astronomy, see George Saliba, *A History of Arabic Astronomy: Planetary Theories During the Golden Age of Islam* (New York: University of New York Press, 1994).
41. To date, the employment of these Islamic calendars in Pamir in particular and the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union in general remains the same; the Christian Georgian calendar is the predominant measure of years.
42. Amirbek Abibov, *Ganj-i Badakhshān* (Dushanbe: Irfān, 1972), 278.
43. Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. C. S. Notté (London, 1969).
44. In this verse, the word ‘bu jahl’ is referred to Abu Jahl, the chief of one of the powerful Meccan tribes, the *Makhzūm*, who strongly opposed the Prophet Muhammad’s preaching of the new religion. This name later became as a symbol of opposition to Islamic ideas. For more details, see Montgomery, W. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

# CHAPTER 3

## THOUGHT: ‘SUFISISED ISMĀ‘ILISM’

### 3.1. SPECTRUM OF THOUGHT

Mubārak’s mystical discourse is firmly based on the general principles of *Taṣawwuf* (Sufism) and its approaches to divine-human relationships within and beyond the realm of the physical universe. It is, therefore, understandable that in his thoughts the key points of the eminent Sufi sages, whose influences on him are discussed in the next section, play a critical role. Yet, it would be wrong to ignore the elements of originality in his thoughts and their theoretical significance in approaching and understanding Pamiri religious tradition. One of the distinguishing elements of Mubārak’s intellectual capacity is his sophisticated deployment of the core ideas, methods, symbolism and language of Sufism in the text and context of Pamiri Ismā‘ilism, and his reconciliation of the dichotomous factors of these two esoteric branches of Islam in the local

religious framework. Likewise, in Mubārak's works, one can observe a strong tendency towards the collection, codification and conceptualisation of the Pamiri Ismā'īlī oral religious tradition, as discussed in chapter 4.

On the other hand, however, one cannot limit Mubārak's poetic imagination to the doctrinal premises of the Ismā'īlī faith in general or his Pamiri Ismā'īlī context in particular. For Mubārak was firstly a poet, articulating his philosophical discourse in poetic language, which does not necessarily manifest the connection of mind with the physical reality, but rather the perception of the reality through the imagination (*khayāl*) and sensual indulgence (*tafaḥḥuṣ* and *taṣawwur*), through metaphor (*isti'āra*) and symbolism (*ramziyyāt*). As Mubārak himself asserts, not all symbolically expressed words in one's language are perceivable; the language itself is, nonetheless, beautiful. In the following *mustazād*, where a dialogue is articulated with God, he intended to provide a basic support for his argument:

گفتم به رموز هر سخنی پی نبرد جان  
گفتا چه خوش آن است  
هر کس گر از این واقف اسرار برآمد  
آتش به جهان شد

(MSS 09, 312a)

I said: "The heart cannot perceive everything in symbols."

He said: "How wonderful is that!"

If everybody realised the secret, then the world would be set ablaze!"

It is, therefore, evident that there is always a dualism in his approach to these issues of epistemology, ontology, physiology and ethics.

To start with his epistemological argument, it should be noted that although the Ismā'īlī view of knowledge, based on the idea of '*aql-i kull* (universal or divine reason) as the main source of '*aql-i juz*' (partial or human reason), which always depends on the former for guidance, enhancement and perfection, regulates Mubārak's understanding of God

and the universe, there remains a dichotomy in his approach to certain epistemological issues concerning the way in which knowledge is acquired and developed. His mystical perception of the '*aql-i kull*' does not exactly fit with Ismā‘īlī theology, which overemphasises the divinity of the Universal Reason in the sense of possessing the divine essence and attributes. He, rather, sees it as a means of divine guidance, enabling the seeker of unity (*tālib-i wahdat*) to recognise and then to walk in the path of knowledge and love. Describing the '*aql-i kull*' as nothing but the combination of drugs used to cure the pain in the lovers' heart, he argues that the treatment, however, depends on the degree to which one has faith in it:

عقل کل نبود بجز ادواء رنج عاشقان پس شفاهاست ز او گر دل به ایمان بسته ای  
(MSS 09, 238b)

The Universal Intellect is nothing but the lovers' painkiller,  
Hence, it is curative, if you have faith in your heart.

The term 'heart' (*dil*) in Islamic mysticism not only refers to a physical organ of the human body, which is usually associated with feelings and emotions, but also an important locus for knowledge (*ma‘rifat*). Although this idea is vastly oversimplified, it can still be a useful means of understanding the role of the heart as a parallel to the mind's locus for knowledge. In the following *mustazād*, Mubārak argues that only the heart is able to perceive the vision and describe the essence of God:

جز دل نتواند صفت صورت دلدار  
خواه که در آن دید  
از وهم تهی گشت ز ز نگار برآمد  
در دیدن آن شد  
(MMS 09, 315.a)

Nothing except the heart may depict the picture of the beloved,  
If you desire to look at Him.  
When the heart is emptied from illusion and purified from  
corrosion,  
Then, it starts seeing Him.

It is evident here that Mubārak admires al-Hallāj and is inspired by his famous comment about the spiritual vision of the beloved as a reflection of himself: “I saw my Lord with the eye of the heart. I said: ‘Who are you? He said: you’”<sup>1</sup>

Mubārak, indeed, accepts the Platonic idea that knowledge is a belief as well as understanding that does not need to be proved or verified; for it is embedded in the very essence of the human beings. Belief, which itself is a product of knowledge on the one hand, and a human response to the divine revelation on the other, can be the key element in understanding the truth (*al-haqq*). In other words, he is saying that knowledge, in the sense of belief, is a divinely inspired source of human hope to determine one’s life’s direction and its meaning. In the following *qit'a*, Mubārak clearly expresses his personal response to the divine revelation and the purpose of his quest for meaning:

ترک کردم جمله نفس خویش را  
تا ببابم گوهری در پیش را<sup>2</sup>

I forsook my entire ego for the sake of finding a treasure before me.

It is obvious that at the heart of this lies a prophetic *hadīth-i qudsī*, often quoted by the Sufis, where God as the direct speaker of the message addressing the human beings, clarifies the purpose of creation: “I was a hidden treasure; I loved to be known so I created the world”.<sup>3</sup> Mubārak, thus, by responding to this message, tries to explain his strategic purpose in choosing love and asceticism as the ways of knowing God.

The issue of knowledge in the Islamic context is very complicated in both the theoretical and terminological senses, depending upon which aspect (theology, philosophy and mysticism) one wishes to consider. In short, there are two kinds of knowledge distinguished in the Islamic lexicon: the Qur'ānic term *'ilm* (active participle *'ālim*) or knowledge in a relatively rational sense (used by the philosophers, historians, jurists and modern scientists), and the non-Qur'ānic term *ma'rifat* (active participle *'ārif*), a spiritual or ‘blessed’ (divinely bestowed) knowledge employed by Sufis and other Islamic mystics.<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons why the term *ma'rifat* is predominated the vocabulary of Islamic mysticism was because it could give some logical, although

not necessarily true or false, explanations in the form of *ta'wīl* (lit. ‘bringing something to its origin’ or discovering the true meaning of divine revelation) to the mysterious verses in the Qur'ān and the *hadīth*, which the term ‘ilm could do in neither its philosophical nor theological applications. Now, while Mubārak as a mystic accepts that *ma'rifat* is the only way of understanding the truth, he nonetheless affirms that it should be (if not a rational) a thoughtful (*fikrānī*) human response to the divine revelation. Although he clearly realises the theoretical difference between ‘ilm and *ma'rifat*, his general approach to the issue of knowledge tends to be of a pragmatic nature, even in the respect to *ma'rifat*. In other words, he insists that the true seeker must not take for granted the advantage of *ma'rifat* as a ‘blessed’ knowledge that could be gained spontaneously (*sar-sarī*) in a miraculous way without human interference. Likewise, and with even more specificity, he documents two main factors in the process of acquiring knowledge, namely learning (*khwānīsh*) and effort (*kūshish*), which both have strictly human nature rather than divine ‘blessing’. This is why he mostly uses a Persian term *dānish* instead of the Arabic word *ma'rifat* to accommodate his applied meaning to the concept of knowledge.

In a similar way, a distinction is made between *dānish* and *khwānīsh* as the cause and effect of happiness or a good fortune (*bakht-i nīkū*), which in its own right is clarified as the sign of the realisation of the truth. In his only book written in prose form, *Hājāt va Munājāt* (*Needs and Inward Prayers*), Mubārak describes *dānish* as the effect of *khwānīsh*, leading the seeker to become united with the Beloved, and *khwānīsh* as its cause, enabling the seeker to realise the path and become detached from his/her ego:

دانش آن است که وحدت پذیری، خوانش آن است که از خود گذری، چونکه پذیری  
ولایت را و مطلق است که برگرفته سعادت را. سعادت پایداریست در سرای آخرت،  
وحدت پروردگاریست که می خوانند عاشقانش، ولایت مدار است بر زمین و آسمان، و  
کردگار است خالق انس و جن.

(MSS 05, 85b)

Knowledge is that you accept unity, and learning is that you  
reject your personal ego. When you accept the *Wilāyat* [of 'Alī],

then you will absolutely be able to obtain happiness. Happiness is subsistence in the house of the hereafter. Unity is the Lord of the faithful believers. *Wilāyat* is the orbit of the earth and the sky and the creator of men and jinn.

Mubārak attributes considerable importance to the role of effort (*kūshish*) as the catalyst in the process of the spiritual quest. The quest, motivated by the seeker's strong efforts, consists of three stages, the first two of which are interpreted as the purely rational actions ('*amal-i sifr 'aqlāni*) performed in the physical world prior to the self's detachment from its physical dimensions. He argues that one's quest for spiritual happiness starts with the stage of the realisation (*dark*) of one's path, as the first step towards the understanding of its meaning (*ma'nā*) and course (*ravish*). In this respect, he offers the only possible way of the realisation of the path, which is learning (*khwānīsh*) conducted through a systematic form of religious education (*ta'līm*), which, during the first stage, has to be taught by 'a truthful teacher' (*mu'allim-i ṣādiq*) or *pīr*, and then, in the second stage, is gained through the personal experience of travelling inwardly (*sulūk*). As mentioned in chapter 1, 'the truthful teacher' was one of the most influential ranks in the Pamiri Ismā‘ilī hierarchy of the *Pirship* and they fulfilled almost all of the obligations of the Imam in his absence. If the first stage is satisfactorily completed, then it brings the seeker to the second stage: the stage of recognition and acceptance (*daryāft-u qabūl*) of the path's aim and the seeker's strong commitment about his journey towards perfection. The key intellectual agent of this stage is knowledge (*dānish*), which, like understanding, is also described as a belief or faith in the realised and recognised path. It is an outcome of learning as well as a human response to God's revelation. These two so-called rational stages of the quest for spiritual happiness provide the seeker with the knowledge of the subject, intellectually strengthening him/her and enabling him/her to choose the path. The third and most important stage is love, described as the fruit of these two stages in the spiritual or psychological sense. Apart from the three aforementioned states (*ḥāl*) of divine love, by passing through each of which the lovers enhance their spiritual quality and finally achieve their ultimate goal, here Mubārak

stresses the importance of the stage of falling in love ('āshiq shudan), not only as the means of God's grace, but also as the result of men's great effort achieved through knowledge. He argues that, through the knowledge applied in the context of a chosen religious path (*tariqat*), the journey towards the determination of the source of love becomes easy and clear. Ismā'īlism, especially its application in the Pamiri religio-cultural context, was perfectly suitable for the accommodation of Mubārak's spiritual needs and its esoteric (*bātīnī*) principles generally harmonised with Sufi mysticism.

Thus, Mubārak's idea of what one would call 'rational love' is of a considerable interest mainly for two reasons. Firstly, divine love is not seen only as an emotional process of the human psyche, but also as a conscious and thoughtful element of human intellect realised through learning, recognised through knowledge and expressed through imagination as an important faculty of the human mind. Secondly, Mubārak puts enormous trust in the role of human effort in divine matters, in one's intellectual growth and in one's spiritual enhancement. The ultimate goal of knowledge, therefore, is to bring the seeker to the source of truth, that is, God, and enable him to find eternal unity in the divine essence.

Before considering the issue of unity (*wahdat*), the question arises, at least from the discursive and logical points of view, what does Mubārak mean by the truth, and how does he define its nature and existence? In the Sufi context, the truth is usually associated with a divine name, *al-haqq* or its attribute, *haqīqat*, which applies to Mubārak too. Nonetheless, he applies his own poetic meaning to the idea of truth and, paradoxically, defines its nature (*fīrat*). Quite apart from its value in explaining the essence of God as the ultimate truth beyond the reach of the human mind, he argues that the nature of the truth is created by the 'good fortune' (*bakht-i nakū*) of the seeker, who is keen to accommodate God's love in his/her heart:

آن بخت نکو فطرت حق ساخت در اندیش  
دل در پی معبود خدا ساختست ریش  
اندر گذر عمر سر اپا ز کم و بیش

در مشورت رحمت جبار برآمد  
از همنفسان شد

(MSS 09, 312a)

Think of a good fortune that created the nature of truth,  
It wounded the heart for God's worship.

During the lifetime, more or less, from head to foot,  
It has been engaged in divine discourse,  
And became the soul-mate of deity.

One can usually understand from this context that by ‘good fortune’ Mubārak means love, however, by using this substitute phrase for love here, he probably wishes to emphasise love’s creative power on the one hand and the creation of truth on the other. The former argument will be further discussed, and it is sufficient to note the significance of the latter argument here. The main point of his argument is that the truth or, more correctly, its nature is itself a product of the lover’s lifetime quest for spiritual happiness. It is the ultimate purpose of human knowledge that can be reached and understood only through love. In other words, it is the lover who creates the nature of the already heard, but as yet unrealised notion of truth. It, thus, seems to be a sort of personal truth, which the creator of its image takes for granted as the Truth, yet at the same time allowing room for the existence of the other truths that might be created by other ‘good fortunes’.

Mubārak sheds further light on the issue of the truth by making a distinction between the truth (*haqq*) as an abstract notion, to which a concrete meaning is applied in a form of an apprehended highest value, and the reality (*haqīqat*) as a concrete phenomenon, which in one respect is used as a definition of the state of the realisation of the truth. It is when the validity of the truth (*haqīqat-i haqq*) appears to the seeker as the condition for the preservation of spiritual power. In other respects, *haqīqat* is seen as what the material world, the sign of God’s existence, is all about. In the following *mustazād*, he constructs an argument resembling al-Hallāj’s ecstatic expression (‘I am the truth’)

that the truth cannot be found elsewhere unless one looks for it within oneself:

حق نیست حقیقت که به اطراف جهان جُست  
 این بیهوده رنجی است  
 گام که بر کشور خود راست برآمد  
 بر منزلت آن شد

(MSS 09, 315.b)

Truth is not a reality to be sought around the world,  
 It is pointless suffering.  
 The right step, which is taken towards the world of your own,  
 Will take you to the destination.

The principal positive idea most strongly advocated by Mubārak is to emphasise the importance of the constant search for truth. The lovers must never cease their quest for the truth until they realise unity:

نبود که به غفلت صفت عمر تھی ساخت  
 دریاب حقیقت  
 یک نکته مراد است اگر در پی وصلی  
 در جُستن آن باش  
 باقی ز همه کلفت و آزار برآمد  
 سودی نہ زیان شد

(MSS 09, 314.b)

The quality of life should not be wasted in negligence,  
 Realise the reality!  
 There is a point of hope, if you are after union;  
 Be in search of it!  
 The rest of inconvenience and grief will leave you,  
 It is a capital that admits no loss.

It is evident from Mubārak's perspective that unity (*wahdat*) is the final fulfilment of human hope as well as the establishment of divine justice in the spiritual sense. One way of approaching this issue is to focus on the idea of union as opposed to the idea of separation in the

context of Islamic mysticism, where the human soul, once a united part of the divine or the universal soul, was separated from its origin for the sake of the knowledge of its creator, God, and, as an eternal spiritual being, was transplanted into the temporary shape (*qālib*), the body, of human beings. Mubārak asserts that the soul of the true seeker (*jūyā-yi ḥaqīqī*) first of all detaches itself from the passion of the temporary or imperfect (*nāqış*) world, and, secondly, chooses the divine path of knowledge (*dānish*) through which it finally recognises its true essence, and then falls in love with and makes its way back to the origin. It appears from his argument that it is during this process of the return (*bāz-gasht*) from the point of separation to the point of union that the soul achieves the ultimate perfection and feels its divinity. In other words, union is not a spontaneous joining of two separate entities, but rather a slow process of the human soul's self-recognition of its divine essence. In this process, the concept of return serves to authenticate the validity of the whole idea behind separation and union, which is the perfection of the soul. It is described as an intermediate link between these two points, the isthmus between the lands of separation and union.

Mubārak, like many other Sufis, employs the term *fanā'* (annihilation) to describe the final stage of his spiritual quest. In one sense, this term suggests that the mystic not only loses his physical dimensions and personal ego, but also his soul and identity in the divine essence. As he asserts in the following *rubā'i*, the image of being united (*wasl*) always leads to the annihilation (*fanā'*) of the body:

هر گه که خیال وصل کردم به وصال جز نقش فنا ندیدم از صورت حال  
 این هست چو شکرتی مبارک که بسا جز مهر و وفا نجستم از پاکتعال  
 (MSS 09, 356a)

Whenever I imagined uniting with union,  
 I see naught, but the imprint of annihilation.  
 It is what Mubārak is thankful for,  
 I did not seek anything from God, but love and devotion.

Likewise, and with even greater simplicity, elsewhere, where he is engaged in a faithful discourse with his beloved (*sanam*), annihilation

(*fanā'*) is opposed to existence (*hastī*) as the only solution (*chāra*) to its elimination:

گفتم صنما چاره هستی چه توان بود  
گفتا که فنا باش  
گفتم که پی وصل چه سانت به دوام بود  
گفتا به یقین آی  
کس صادق وحدت شد و اقرار برآمد  
کاو هدم جان شد

(MSS 09, 313a)

I said: "O the beloved, what is the remedy for existence"  
 He said: "Be annihilated!"  
 I said: "how can I run towards you for union"  
 He said: "Be certain!"  
 When a person is sincere about unity and admits it,  
 Then he becomes a companion of the Soul".

Nonetheless, in another sense, annihilation for him tends not to be a complete disappearance of the human soul in the divine essence, rather it is understood as the discovery of a new, but eternal existence, being, therefore, the only way of realising the true meaning of existence, in which the hidden unveils itself:

تا وصل نگار خاطر انود مر  
هستی به تمام از بر افزود مر  
لطف و کرم و عطای حق بود مر  
از کتم عدم نمود موجود مر  
از فضل و عطای اوست این بود مر

(MSS 09, 286a)

As I remembered the link with the beloved,  
 My need for existence increased all over again.  
 It was the grace and favour of the Almighty,  
 To bring me into existence from hidden non-being,  
 My being is a gift from His mercy.

Annihilation (*fanā'*) as a process of self destruction, on the one hand, and the persistence of the soul, on the other, is regarded by him as a

means of the eternal existence or subsistence (*baqā’*) of the human soul, in which the selfish ego (*nafs*) dies and the true soul (*jān*) endures. It is the final fulfilment of the divine justice promised for humanity in the scriptures. In the concluding part of the *Needs and the Inward Prayers*, although it is in the form of a supplementary prayer, Mubārak tries to explain briefly the ultimate goal behind his spiritual quest, which is the union with the beloved, and to describe how he imagines this union:

الهی پناه ده که از خود گذریم، و وفا ده که به سوی تو سبیزیم، فنا جویم در بقای تو  
و وفا جویم در پناه تو، استعانت دار که ملغژم، و عدالت دار که به جز تو مغیژم،  
کثرت آئینه صورت است، و صورت آئینه‌دار وحدت است، صورت آسمانی  
وصباح است، و وحدت در میان همچون آفتاب است، وهم و گمان در پی صورتند،  
عارفان و صادقان در پی وحدتند، دریافتند عاشقان وحدت را به کثرت، و ربوتند  
گوی بخت را از میدان سعادت و به ظهورهم و نریتهم و الست بربرکم صادقند، و  
آنانی که به کثرت ظهور وحدانیت را انکار می کنند اهل منافقند، خواست الهیت  
ذات که نور احادیث قائم شد، آفتاب وحدانیت بر آسمان چارم شد، و می تابد به دیده  
اهل یقین، و نمی نماید بر نظر منافقان از روی خشم و کبر و کین

(MSS 05, 94a, 105b)

O God, grant me asylum that I may escape from myself, and grant me fidelity that I may run towards you. I am looking for annihilation in your subsistence and fidelity in your protection. Help me not to fall down. Establish justice so I will not crawl upon my hands and knees towards anybody, but you... Multiplicity is the mirror of the form, and the form is the mirror-holder of unity. The form is transcendental and beautiful, and unity is likened to the sun in the middle. Illusion and doubt are always in search of the form. The gnostics and faithful ones seek for unity. The lovers found unity opposed to multiplicity and achieved happiness because they are faithful to the expression of *Am I not your Lord?*<sup>5</sup> Those who reject the occurrence of union with the means of multiplicity are hypocrites. It was the divine will that the light of oneness became constant, and the sun of union appeared in the fourth heaven, the heaven that is visible to the eyes of the people of the certainty, but is hidden from the gaze of the hypocrites because of their anger, arrogance and plot.

Contrasting unity with multiplicity, he affirms that multiplicity is the reflection of the oneness in the mirror of illusion, seen through the eyes of ignorance. It is like seeing oneself in the mirror, in which the oneness of a single reality is rejected by the double face of the image and the reflection. It is evident, in this light, that the idea of the acceptance of unity as proof of divine-human relations is justified on the basis of the primordial covenant of the *alast* and the idea of its rejection on the basis of the disobedience of Satan to human beings on the eve of the creation. Hence, acceptance as a sign of certainty, faithfulness and obedience, is opposed to rejection as a sign of ignorance and hypocrisy. Mubārak reflects further on this issue by asserting that the union with God is merely a matter of the state of the heart (*ḥālat-i dil*), in which one finally finds peace in the divine presence. In the following *tarjī-band*, he describes this *ḥālat* as ‘finding peace in the heart’ (*jam’ āmadan-i dil*), which is the core aim in one’s quest for God within oneself:

جمع آمدن دل است مطلب به خدا تا چند پی خیال گردی به جهان  
 (MSS 09, 272a)

The aim from God is finding peace in the heart,  
 How long will you stroll around the world imagining

Mubārak always emphasises the importance of being certain (*yaqīn*) in the chosen spiritual path. Although he does not directly refer to any source to support this point, one can clearly see the influence of the sixth (or the fifth in the *Ismā’īlī* account) and the most eminent Shī‘ī Imam Ja‘far al-ṣādiq (d 765), who positioned certitude (*yaqīn*) in the fourth place of the twelve springs of gnosis (*ma’rifat*).<sup>6</sup> In almost all his works, Mubārak, while referring to certainty as the power (*quwwat*) of the heart that encourages the lover to seek for and determine the court of the Beloved, he draws attention to the two main elements of the human psyche that causes discouragement to the heart when perceiving the truth: illusion (*wahm*) and doubt (*gumān*). He argues that the soul, which is sometimes referred to as ‘the quality’ (*śifat*) of the human body or physical manifestation (*śūrat*), by its nature, is free from illusion and

doubts because there is always a link between the soul and its origin, that is, God, which helps to protect the human's heart from illusion and keeps the divine-human channel updated:

نبوت صفت و صورت آدم به تغافل  
با وهم و گمان داشتن دل به تقابل  
اینجا خبر بیئه‌ما برزخ  
ز این واقعه چون نکته اسرار برآمد  
با شرح و بیان شد

(MSS 09, 311a)

The human form and quality are not out of ignorance,  
To associate the heart with illusion and doubt.  
Here is the report: “there is an isthmus between them”.<sup>7</sup>  
When the secret point of this case is disclosed,  
Then it becomes clear and lucid.

On the one hand, he attempts to ensure the validity of the ever-present link between the divine and human souls, and to stress the significance of the human soul's potential awareness of its origin and the need for the actualisation of this awareness as the means to perfection. The question that now arises is why, then, the human soul, being a potential intelligible part of the divine soul, still accommodates such inferior, as he believes, senses as illusion and doubt Mubārak's answer to this question is that the lack of the two most significant tools of spiritual discovery, namely desire (*khwāhish*) and effort (*kūshish*), interrupts the heart's self-awareness (*bīdārī-yi dil*) and causes deliberate negligence (*ghaflat*). Hence, the signs of poor imagination (*da‘f-i khayāl*), illusion and doubt disable the heart's intellectual and physical capacities to realise the truth and lead to perplexity (*hayrat*):

بالین به تھییر زده در بستر و همی  
این ضعف خیال است  
در خلوت دل یک مژه بیدار برآمد  
واقف ز نهان شد

(MSS 09, 315b)

You are confused in the realm of illusion,  
 This is the weakness of imagination.  
 In the heart's corner of solitude an eyelash is cognisant,  
 It has become aware of the hidden.

In Mubārak's lexicon, one very often faces some metaphoric expressions of a general Sufi nature, emphasising the purity of the human heart, such as the 'pure heart' (*dil-i pāk* or its Arabic equivalent *qalb al-ṣafā*, which is the title of one of his works) as a symbol of the 'true believer', or 'polish the mirror of your heart!' as a call for the realisation of and walking in 'the true' religious path. According to him, the mixtures of 'dust', which darkens the mirror of the human heart and separates it from the light of unity, are illusion, doubt and perplexity:

گفتم که صفا آئینه طینت ما گن  
 گفتا مبرش وهم  
 این جا چو کشش حیرت و انکار برآمد  
 مردود جهان شد

(MSS 09, 313a)

I said: "purify the mirror of our nature,"  
 He said: "do not doubt it!  
 For if somebody perplexes and denies,  
 He will be fired from the world."

Admiring one of the Qur'ānic verses, most quoted by the Sufis ('it is not the eyes that are blind but the hearts', 22:46), Mubārak proceeds to describe the illusionary heart as a foolish one, which is divided into sections accommodated by perplexity and doubt. This division deprives the heart from the quest for itself and leads it towards strangers:

نتوان دلی به وهم که دیوانه توان بود      حیرت و گمان در پی بیگانه توان بود  
 (MSS 09, 311b)

The heart should not be filled with illusion as it might become mad,  
 Doubt and perplexity can lead the heart astray from itself.

Thus, Mubārak emphasises the importance of the heart as parallel with the mind's locus of knowledge as the key element in his perception of the spiritual reality. He believes that only the heart is capable of understanding one's inner meaning as it is the door to one's soul. But the heart, he believes, should be purified from illusion and perplexity before it can clearly 'see' inside oneself and perceive the vision of divine.

### 3.2. RELATIONS AND INFLUENCES

It is evident from Mubārak's works, as well as from local stories about him, that he did not have any particular Sufi master nor did he follow any particular Sufi *tariqat*, and that his mystical inspiration was merely subject to his belief in the spirit of 'Alī, as the true and eternal manifestation of the divine love embodied in the Ismā‘ilī context of the Imam of the Time. This is not to say, of course, that his entire mysticism is based on Ismā‘ilī esotericism. For there are certain elements in his ideas that are strongly influenced by the great pillars of Persian and Arabic Sufism, such as Sanā‘ī (d. 1131), 'Attār (d. 1220), Rūmī (d. 1273), Hāfiẓ (d. 1389), Bīdil (d. 1720), Mansūr al-Hallāj (d. 922), Bāyazīd Bistāmī (d. 875), and Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240). Generally speaking, Mubārak's works are very much composed in the light of the pre-modern Persian Sufi literary tradition, in both the poetic forms and textual implications. An examination of his works shows that they are strongly nourished by Rūmī's philosophy of love, al-Hallāj's applied asceticism, 'Attār's mystical symbolism, and Ibn al-‘Arabī's concept of the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Likewise, while reading his poetry, especially the *ghazals*, one can appreciate the beauty of the language on the one hand and its simplicity on the other, inspired by the master of *ghazal*, Hāfiẓ, and the *sabk-i Hindī* of Bīdil. All these points are obviously manifested in Mubārak's works and discussed accordingly in the appropriate parts of this study.

How far, however, are his arguments supported by and derived from a particular Sufi-poetic authority. To answer this question one has to concentrate on the specific references made by Mubārak to the aforementioned

Sufi sages. He does directly employ in much of his works some ideas from pre-modern Persian sages, either in the form of full quotations or brief references, to explain or, more correctly, justify his points on the basis of a solid authority. From the academic point of view, on the other hand, Mubārak seems to be very honest, genuine and accurate when it comes to citing the work of a particular poet. Yet, of course, he occasionally fails to mention the name of a quoted book and the relevant page number. The Sufi most often referred to and quoted by Mubārak is Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, particularly his *Mathanvī*. Before discussing Rūmī's influence on Mubārak, two main reasons should be given for this. First, there is the unquestionable authority of Rūmī as the great 'ārif (gnostic) and 'āshiq (lover) in the history of Persian Sufism. His *Mathnavī-yi Ma'navī* is regarded as the inner meaning or even the translation of the Qur'ān in Persian. As Cooper comments: "*Mathanvī* became for subsequent generations an eloquent encyclopaedia of Sufi teaching from which they would mine the gems of its verses down to the present day".<sup>8</sup> Second, there is the importance of Rūmī's image as associated with Shams-i Tabrīzī (d. 1310) in the Pamiri religious tradition. In other words, Rūmī is known by the name of his teacher and beloved Shams, to whom he not only dedicated his poems, but whose name, Shams-i Tabrīzī, he also used as his 'pen-name' (*nisba*).<sup>9</sup>

It is worth giving an example of a Pamiri traditional point of view concerning Shams in order to determine the significance of the meaning applied to his role in the local religious context, as explained in Mubārak's works. The summary of a traditional legend about Shams, which starts with al-Hallāj's execution, is as follows: when Manṣūr al-Hallāj unveiled his divinity (*Ana al-Haqq*), he was hoisted up on a gibbet and executed the following morning. His body was burned and his ashes scattered into a river. However, as the story continues and slowly transforms into a mysterious legend, the ashes swam through the oceans and rivers until it reached a stream (*jūybār*) in a royal garden, from which the king's daughter drank some of the water containing the ashes and became pregnant with the future Shams.<sup>10</sup> The story then goes into more details about Sham's magical birth, resembling that of Jesus, his extraordinary knowledge during early

childhood and his subsequent travels. In the end, it creates an imaginary Shams in the person of an Ismā'īlī Imam, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, the contemporary of Shams-i Tabrīzī and the son of the last ruler of Alamūt, Rukn al-Dīn Khurshāh (d. 1257), who was overthrown by the Mongols. It should be noted that the obscure nature of Shams al-Dīn Muhammad's life, which was due to the Mongol massacre of the Ismā'īlīs and the following chaotic milieu of the post-Alamūt period, is probably one of the reasons for the later emergence of such legendary stories among the community. Although the historical irrelevance of the story is beyond doubt, it is still valuable in explaining the strong historical and doctrinal relationships between Sufism and Ismā'īlīsm, and their common perception of religion as the inner experience of human existence, as the meaning of life. Likewise, the image of Shams is symbolised as the manifestation of the human hope for which al-Hallāj sacrificed himself and of the divine justice, which was established in the person of Shams. From the historical perspective, for the Ismā'īlīs oppressed and devastated by the Mongols, the appearance of Shams al-Dīn Muhammad was indeed a new hope as well as a manifestation of divine justice.

Now, tracing the influence of Rūmī as Shams on Mubārak, it is important to consider the direct references and certain quotations in his major works, and then seek to explain the pretexts for them. In *Kashf al-Ṣalawāt*, when explaining the esoteric meaning of the *Sūra al-Ikhlāṣ* (Q, 112: 3) concerning God's nature of being free from and giving birth to anyone, Mubārak admits that the meaning of this *Sūra* can be found in Rūmī's *Mathnavī*:

هست اnder بیان این معنا  
نکته‌ای هم به مثنوی پیدا  
غرقه نوری که او لم یولد است لم یلد او لم یولد آن ایزد است  
(MSS 04, 4a)

The meaning of the following,  
May be found in the *Mathnavī*:  
'He is not begotten', but full of light  
His 'non begetting' is God's 'non begotten'.

Similarly, a reference is made to Rūmī's idea of the sorrow of separation (*judayī*) from the divine source and the desire for the return (*bāzgasht*) to

it. In his *Risāla-yi Chihil Dunyā*, Mubārak quotes the prologue (the first two lines) of Rūmī's *Maṭnavī* in order to support his argument concerning the necessity for the recognition of the human soul's innermost longings and the importance of the soul's quest for its divine origin (*aṣl*).<sup>11</sup> In the following couplets addressing the 'inattentive' (*ghāfil*) reader, he stresses that the soul's existence between past and present (the moment of separation) is meaningless and illogical unless it is truly awakened and fully aware of its ultimate longings. Likewise, he wishes to persuade the reader to realise the inevitability of the soul's return on the one hand, and the unrepeatable nature of the human body on the other:

نبی در بند و نه به معنای چه سبب سعی نیست بر اصلت در پی جنس سعی پیش کنند چه سبب بر تو سعی و طینت نیست	چیست بود و هست پیدایی چون بریدند غنچه و صلت جنسها میل جنس خویش کنند ز پی صورت تو صورت نیست
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(MSS 08, 16)

What is your past and present, just existence  
 You are neither logical nor meaningful.  
 Ever since the rose-bud of your link was cut,  
 Why do not you try to find your essence?  
 Every kind is keen towards their equivalent,  
 And make effort to follow their gender.  
 Your body will never resurrect again,  
 Why do not you look for your soul?

Developing the last point that each entity desires to return to and achieve unity with its equivalent, he supports his argument by referring to another, comparatively recent *Dari*-speaking poet and mystic of the eighteenth-century Indian subcontinent, Mirzā 'Abd al-Qādir Bīdil.<sup>12</sup> In an example of a drop, which returns to a river and then finally constitutes an ocean, he asserts that eventually everything returns to its origin:

بازگشت قطره به دریاست دریاست قطره ای که به دریاست رسید	مصروعی هم ز بیدل این معناست جز ماکسی دیگر نتواند به ما رسید
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(MSS 08, 16)

A drop's return is to the sea,  
As Bīdil explains in the following distich:  
“The sea is a drop which has reached the sea,  
Nobody except ourselves can reach us”.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, there are several other indirect references to Bīdil in Mubārak's works, especially in *Satan and Adam's Dispute* (*Mujādila-yi Iblīs va Ādam*), where the traditional story about Satan's disobedience of God's command to adore (or pay tribute to) the newly created Adam is discussed. By referring to Bīdil, Mubārak aims to justify his point about the importance of the vulnerable submission to and the extreme state of adoration before God.

Mubārak also quotes Hāfiẓ in the *Chihil Dunyā*, when discussing the traditional Pamiri Ismā‘ilī version of the story of the Prophet's ascent (*Mīrāj*) in which the divinity of ‘Alī is the main subject. Here the main point of Mubārak's reference is the doctrinal significance of Hāfiẓ's expression concerning the mysterious nature of the divine secret (*sirr-i Khudā*). He attempts to justify the traditional Ismā‘ilī anthropocentric view of God in which the divine attributes are embedded in the persona of ‘Alī. The following two distiches, the last of which belongs to Hāfiẓ, express the Prophet's perplexity about the true nature of the divine secret, which was unveiled to him upon his return from the *Mīrāj* by ‘Alī:

شد به مراجش هر چه گفت و شنود مصروعی هم ز حافظ است و بیان سر خدا که عارف سالک به کس نگفت ناسفته گوهری ز پی سفت آمده	به پیغمبر به جمله باز نمود غافلی یاد کن اشاره از آن در حیرتم که باده فروش از کجا شنید با نقد دل صراف نگر از کجا رسید
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(MSS 08, 30)

Whatever conversation that took place on the Ascent,  
He exclusively disclosed to the Prophet.

There is a distich from Hāfiẓ that provides an explanation,  
O ignorant one, remember to refer to it:

“I am amazed at how the vintner knew the secret of God,  
That the gnostic sojourner revealed to none.  
An unornamented treasure is being ornamented,  
Look prodigiously from the depths of your heart from whence it  
came”.<sup>14</sup>

As far as Mubārak's indirect references to the great Sufi authorities are concerned, they are not simply used as supporting ideas, but also as modified and developed points in their own right. For instance, al-Hallāj's famous ecstatic expression 'I am the Truth' (*Ana al-Ḥaqq*) is used as a prime example of one's strong sense of self-certainty and belief in one's inner extraordinary spiritual power:

گردد به یقین ز تو به سر منزل وصل گامی که به کوی عشق رفتار دهی  
 نگست انا الحقت ز تسلیم زبان خواهی به یقین سری که بر دار دهی  
 (MSS 09, 244b)

You will certainly reach the destination of unity,  
 If you take a step towards the path of love,  
 Your *ana'l haqq* will not withdraw from your tongue's submission,  
 If you surely want to lose your head under the gibbet.

It is evident here that the phrase *ana al--haqq-at* is derived from al-Hallāj's expression, but the added suffixes *at* (implied as 'yours') makes it literally read '*your ana al--haqq*', which symbolises the state of complete certainty in the chosen path. In other words, he argues that the true lover of God must follow the example of Mansūr, which involves being entirely certain of himself and firm in the chosen path of love despite any dangers on the journey. This kind of derivation is very common in Persian Sufi literature, for instance the famous expression, *rūz-i alast* (the day of *alast*), standing for the day of divine-human primordial covenant, is derived from the aforementioned qur'ānic passage *Alastu bi Rabbikum* (Am I not your Lord).

Likewise, and even more metaphorically, Mubārak elaborates on Bistāmī's famous expression that: "When the ego is gone, then God is His own mirror for me".<sup>15</sup> Describing love as a mirror, whose reflection is nothing but the soul, Mubārak argues that the soul, however, is not entirely free from the ego, its opponent (*raqīb*), which exists within that mirror but on the opposite side, leading in the opposite direction:

عشق آنینه ایست اگر در او کس نگرد جز صورت جان ندید گر کس نگرد  
 ترسم که رقیب با دو رو آنینه داشت گر پیش نظر توی او پس نگرد  
 (MSS 09, 365b)

Love is a mirror if one looks at it,  
 One can see naught, but the image of the soul.  
 I fear, however, that the opponent holds two face to face mirrors,  
 If you look straight, he stares backwards.

### 3.3. LOVE

In the previous chapter, I examined Mubārak’s spiritual state and addressed some issues concerning the role played by love in his poems. The question that presents itself at this point is what does love mean to Mubārak, and how does he explain this important subject of Sufi theosophy in his works? When examining his major works, especially *Dīvān-i Kulliyāt*, *Tālib al-Maṭlūb* and *Hājāt va Munājāt*, one can observe a general Sufi tendency towards the application of the term *muḥabbat* or ‘ishq (passionate love), which dominates Mubārak’s lexicon, in a multidimensional spectrum. ‘Ishq, as a key word and essential theme of his poetry, is described in a triangular form of the three actors separate in role but unique in meaning: love itself (‘ishq), the lover (‘āshiq) and the beloved (*ma’shūq*). It is said that the non-Qur’ānic term, ‘ishq, which was first employed by a seventh-century Sufi from Basra, ‘Abd al-Wāhid, to describe human-divine relationship, is derived from the Arabic word ‘ashaqa (Persian *labālab*), a type of vine that by winding itself around the tree, dries it up, just as love does to the human body.<sup>16</sup> It is unsurprising that Mubārak, like the other Islamic mystics, does not give an exact definition of love and agrees with them, especially Rūmī, that the best way of knowing love is to have a personal experience of being in love.<sup>17</sup> The love, to which he refers, is, of course, divine love, a love of the creature for its creator and vice versa, which, contrary to human erotic love (‘ishq-i shahvānī), whose ultimate point is the satisfaction of sexual lust, aims to become like the beloved. The divine lover desires his soul to flee into the Beloved’s embrace (as it is said in the Qur’ān: ‘hasten ye then to God’, 51: 50) and be annihilated in His essence.

The platonic idea of spiritual love or love of the soul (in *Symposium*), derived from human erotic love or love of the body, was well developed and applied in the context of Islamic mysticism and even went far beyond

that when the ninth-century female saint from Basra Rābi‘a al-Adawiyya (d. 801) for the first time made a distinction between the selfish and selfless dimensions of spiritual love and gave priority to the latter as the only way to reach the court of the beloved without asking Him for anything but love.<sup>18</sup> Mubārak’s definition of love also expresses the selfless desire for unity with God, addressed as Love as well as the Beloved, disregarding the two essential dogmatic theological concepts of reward (paradise) and punishment (hell) promised to be fulfilled in the hereafter as the means of divine justice. The following verses explain Mubārak’s general didactic purpose in defining love’s aim as the meaning of his spiritual quest:

فردوس و جنات و خلد و رضوان چه کنم  
یا رب به من این بس است گر داده ای عشق  
(MSS 09, 367a)

Why do I need paradise with its garden and gardener?  
It is enough, O Lord, when you have given me love!

For it is only love that fulfils his desire and makes his spiritual quest so valuable. The lover’s superior position is, however, burdened with spiritual aspiration (*murād*), and Mubārak, in asking the aim (*maqṣad*) of one’s wish, states that it is to find fidelity (*wafā’*):

مطلوب ز مراد چیست دریاب وفا با اهل عدل بکوش و دریاب بقاء  
(MSS 09, 367b)

What is the aim of the spiritual aspiration? Attaining devotion,  
And finding eternity alongside with the people of justice.

Such lines are addressed to the believers who take the Qur’ān too literally; for their desire has a physical connotation based on their own intent, that is, to find paradise in the hereafter. On the contrary, Mubārak’s aspiration, as he himself thinks, goes beyond that; for him divine love is more than enough:

ما جز طلب محبت حق نکنیم گام قدم هوس پی دق نکنیم  
(MSS 09, 286b)

We seek naught, but the love of God,  
A step of our desire will not be wasted for nonsense.

Addressing God as the mighty saviour of all those in need, Mubārak begs God to give him only His divine majestic love:

فریادرسی به غمگساران جهان      بر من کن عطا که مهر سلطان تو بس  
(MSS 09, 88a)

You are the redresser of the world's compassionate people,  
Grant me your divine love and it is enough for me.

Long chains of similar admiring rhetorical verses are used to stress God's omnipotence and His divine love for which Mubārak was ready to exchange everything, including God's grace and kindness:

مقصود مرا به جز محبت نبود      جز مهر و وفا به طبع و رغبت نبود  
لطف و کرم و عطا چو بخشی یکسان      بر من به جزت ز مهر شوقت نبود  
(MSS 11, 235a)

I have no goal save love,  
Naught but love and affection suit my temper and desire,  
If you bestow grace and kindness evenly,  
I shall not have anything, except your love and mercy.

At the heart of Mubārak's concept of love lies a fundamental principle that underlies the significance of the realisation of being in love with and loved by the object of spiritual desire. He asserts that when in love, however, the meaning of real love remains incomplete until it complies with the beloved's faithful response. In short, the true essence of real love is embedded in the harmony between the state of being in love with and the state of being loved by the beloved. Concerning the nature of love, as it is manifested in the lover, he stresses that it is a divine gift (*dād-i haqq*) implanted in the hearts of the chosen human beings through the wish (*khwāhish*) and grace (*lutf*) of God. It is God, who first falls in love with His creatures and then they fall in love with Him, as is articulated

in the Qur'ān: *He loves them, they love Him* (5:54) or *God guides to His light whom He pleases* (24: 35):

نبوت صفت از مهر و وفا کس به خودی ساخت  
تا حق نگمارد  
این واسطه از رحمت جبار برآمد  
کس طالب آن شد

(MSS 09, 314a)

Love's essence is beyond one's creativity,  
Unless it is entrusted by God.  
It is God's mercy to mediate,  
And enable one to become His follower.

But the question that arises at this point, and of course from the mystical point of view, is how does the lover know that he is loved by his beloved, who is invisible even to the eyes of the heart (*chashm-i dil*) in the first stage of spiritual discovery. Mubārak's answer to this question is that there are three abodes (*manāzil*) of love's progression in the second phase (intoxication) of the three above discussed spiritual states (awareness, intoxication, and annihilation): attraction to (*jazba*), appreciation of and inclination towards (*girāyish*) the divine beauty (*jamāl*) which is the cause of love and the essence of God, who indeed "is beautiful and loves beauty".<sup>19</sup> It is through divine inspiration (*ta'yid*) that one obtains knowledge in the true sense that the seeker of God becomes fully aware of and attracted to the core meaning of the divine revelation and through the faculty of imagination (*khayāl*) that this beauty appears to him/her. It, then, according to Mubārak, leads the seeker to banish every attachment to physical beauty and appreciate the divine beauty and finally fall in love with it. When love captures the hearts of the seekers (*tālibān*) of God, who according to Mubārak are the true walkers (*mardān-i rāh*) on the straight path (*ṣirāt al-mūstaqīm*), their status changes to the next, but higher level; that is, the status of lovers (*martaba-yi 'āshiqān*), and they then embark on a long, irreversible (*bī-bāzgashī*) voyage in order to determine the source of love, namely,

God, in order to be adequate to and unify with Him. As is said in the Qur’ān: “Say if ye do love God, follow me and then God will love you” (3:31). Hence, Mubārak affirms that God loves those whom have true knowledge of Him, appreciate His real beauty and exchange the temporary love of the material world for His eternal love. Before discussing Mubārak’s definitions of the lover and the beloved and the ways of maintaining relationships between these two agents of love, it is important to comment on the nature of love itself from his theosophical and poetic-imaginative points of view, which sometimes goes beyond the doctrinal boundaries of the Ismā‘ilī as well as the Sufi orthodoxies. For instance, in referring to God as Love, which of course is not an innovation in Islamic mysticism, Mubārak occasionally tries to draw attention to rather a reverse reading of this phrase, that is, ‘Love as God’. Although there seems to be no great grammatical difference created by reversing the word order, it is obvious that the applied meaning in both cases has slightly different connotations regarding the context of a particular argument. As for the first argument, it is sufficient to quote Lings’ definition of ‘God as Love’, which summarises almost all of the best definitions ever produced concerning this:

When it is said that God is Love, the highest meaning this can have is that the Archetype of all the positive relationships—conjugal, parental, filial and fraternal—are indivisibly One in the Infinite Self-Sufficing (*as-Samad*) Perfection of the Divine Essence.<sup>20</sup>

Here, the emphasis is on the word ‘God’ as the subject of the sentence as well as the main point of the argument. It is if someone had asked a complicated question in a very simple way: ‘What or who is God?’, and received a very subjective definition: God is Love. All the positive relationships that this description defines linguistically tend to belong to the realm of the physical world from which ascetics like Mubārak sought to divorce themselves. On the contrary, when Mubārak says that Love is God, the stress, both grammatically and logically, is clearly shifted from ‘God’ to ‘love’: ‘God’ is no longer the subject of the question, but rather the answer obtained or the definition derived from the word ‘love’.

From the theological point of view, both arguments tend to overlook the essence of God, which is beyond love and, in Ismā‘īlī theology, even far beyond being and non-being. However, Mubārak, by changing the word order, not only stresses the importance of the subject-matter of his spiritual quest, that is, love, but also attempts to accommodate the theological arguments concerning the divine essence and attributes. Mubārak understands that, when God is directly associated with other beings, His divinity is restricted and His Oneness exhausted. Nonetheless, Mubārak's point is that, since God is everywhere ("whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God", Qur'ān, 2: 115) and the source of everything, He accordingly is the source of love and affection. The aforementioned Qur'ānic verses and prophetic *aḥādīth* implicitly suggest that God loves and wants to be loved and, therefore, love in its very nature is an attribute of God, just like Mercy, Will, Power, Knowledge, Life and several other divine attributes. Hence, when it is said that love is God, it is Him whom the lovers are really seeking. Love as one of God's most important attributes is the intermediate link between the two. It is the only way to reach Him:



کتاب پرسیزی ما به جریت محبت و مهر مباد  
مولای منی عطا کن از فضل الله بر جان مبارک آن که جز مهر مباد  
(MSS 05, 88b)

Except you, let there be no love and affection for us,  
Except your pure unity, let there be no cheek and face.  
You are my Lord, so bestow by the divine grace,  
On Mubārak's soul naught, but love.

Referring to God as the only aim of his spiritual quest in both worlds, Mubārak believes that God's grace and mercy will reach those who seek Him constantly with weeping eyes:

مطلوب توی به مطلب از هر دو جهان حاصل به جز از تو نیست در کون و مکان  
خواهی که عطا ز رحمت و جود بری سازی به دو چشم تر به سویش نگران  
(MSS 05, 98a)

You are the sought of the seeker in both worlds,  
 Nothing, except you, is expected from the universe and place.  
 If you want generosity and mercy to be bestowed upon you,  
 Look with two weeping eyes towards Him.

Now, while Mubārak accepts that love is one of the attributes of God, he nonetheless wants to regard it as the most important divine attribute maintaining the world, as the essence of human existence and its ultimate destiny. Love is the cause of the creation, the creator and the decorator of all beauty, which the world possesses. Emphasising the famous aforementioned prophetic *ḥadīth* that God created the world out of His love, Mubārak says:

گر عشق نبود صورت دهر نبود      اقلیم و ایان و کشور و شهر نبود  
 هستی همه در عشق سرانجام گرفت      آراست جهان به صورت و رنگ و نمود  
 (MSS 09, 357b)

If there were no love, the image of the universe would not existed,  
 Nor would there be time, continents, countries and cities.  
 Existence was entirely completed in love,  
 Which ornamented the image, colour and appearance of the universe.

Since love is the decorator of all beauty and causes all the right and beautiful actions (*iḥsān*), it is definitely associated with men's morality (*akhlāq*) and courtesy (*adab*) and, therefore, is regarded as the source of all goodness. Rūmī even describes *adab* as the inner meaning of the entire qur'ānic verses: "Open your eyes and look at God's Word! Courtesy is the meaning of each and every verse of the Qur'ān".<sup>21</sup> It should be remembered that in Tajik-Persian literature, both religious and secular, the ideas of courtesy and righteousness have always been central to the poetic discourses and the art of literature is even called *adabiyyāt*. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the theme of love, even in the sense of sexual desire, has moral connotations. When Mubārak defines love as men's meaningful destiny, he seeks to separate not only human beings

and animals that are closely related biologically, but also human beings themselves. He argues that those humans, who are unable to appreciate the beauty of love and cannot feel its real pain, are indeed animals, just with two legs (*hayvān-i dupā*). In the following quatrain, the entire essence of humanity is embodied in love as a sign of sagacity (*firāsat*):

عشق ار نبود فراست اینجا عدم است      حیوان دوپا چه با دو صد پای کم است  
مشمار که جمله در شمار ادبند      انسان بود آن که در پی عشق و غم است  
(MSS 09, 358b)

If there is no love, then there would not be sagacity.  
A two-legged animal is short even with two hundred legs.  
Do not regard everybody in the line of righteousness,  
A human being is the one who seeks love and pain.

In the next *rubā‘ī*, Mubārak aims to persuade his readers about the necessity of walking in the path of love as one of the conditions of righteousness, but warns about its consequences, such as sadness and pain, with which not everyone is able to cope. Sadness and pain will continue until the journey to the intermediate world of grave is completed and love flies to the abode of eternal happiness: love.

آسان نبود ولیک بنمودن عشق      شرط ادب است راه پیمودن عشق  
این است ره وفاء پیوستن عشق      سر زد غم و درد ناله و آه و فغان  
(MSS 09, 357b)

Walking in the path of love is a rule of righteousness,  
Manifestation of love, however, is not easily guaranteed.  
When sadness and pain, anguish and lamentation arise,  
Then the trusty way of reunion with love is found.

The idea of love in Mubārak’s poetic imagination has a symbolic meaning, symbolising, as he believed, the ultimate truth rather than constituting an exact representation of it. Describing love in metaphorical language, therefore, represents the fusion of his thoughts and feelings. It is the sensible way of seeing the unseen reality and its interpretation through spiritual hermeneutics. In the following quatrain, the analogies

of ‘love’ and ‘lover’ are simply based on the observation of the real facts of the material world, the creatures, in which the creator makes itself known to the humans, but, quite apart from its value in helping to explain the true meaning of love, the didactic purpose of the quatrain is to stress the lover’s importance as the main agent of love:

عشق است چو ماه و هاله عاشق بوی است برق است چو عشق ژاله عاشق بوی است  
خمخانه وحدت است گر نوش کنی عشق است چو می پیاله عاشق بوی است  
(MSS 09, 358b)

Love is like the moon and the corona is in love with it,  
Lightning is like love and the hail is in love with it.  
It is the wine house of unity, if you drink,  
Love is like wine and the cup is in love with it.

In the next description, where love symbolises the soul and the lover stands for the body, an argument concerning the selfishness of human nature as a self-destructive factor is justified on the basis of the story of Adam's creation where Satan refused to bow to the newly created human being. One of the didactic purposes of this story is that Satan's arrogance did not allow him to appreciate the divine will of the soul's incarnation in the human body and consequently the 'leader of the angels' (*sadr al-malā'ik*) was expelled from God's court and banished forever. Here, Satan symbolises the actual state of the human ego (*nafs*), which is potentially capable of distracting love and creating a barrier to the soul's perfection:

عشق است چو جان و عاشق آمد چو جسد پیوسته به هم که ابلیس آمد به حسد  
(MSS 09, 358b)

**Love is like the soul and the lover appears as its body,  
As they united together, Satan became jealous.**

Satan's jealousy of God's love for human beings deprived him of the realisation of his ultimate destiny and infected him with the passion and greed for the material world. This infection is so strong that even the

lovers of God in the first stage of love feel jealous when the beloved deliberately ignores them:

تا عشق نمود جلوه در عالم جان  
عاشق ز پی نظاره آمد حیران  
دل بردهای از من عشوهای با دیگران  
این نیست به شرح مصطفی داده بیان  
انصاف تو خود کن ای ستمگار در آن

(MSS 09, 280b)

As love progressed into the world of the soul,  
The lover was in awe after eyeballing:  
“You took my heart, but amorous with others,  
It is not what the Prophet’s revelation says.  
O oppressor, be just in this matter!”

In order to find an answer to his question, Mubārak engages in a dialogue with the beloved and attempts to find alternative ways of maintaining the relationship with Him. He asserts that there is no better way to deprive one’s own Satan and preserve God’s love than to keep the heart constantly alert on the path of love:

گفتم که محبت چه کنم نکسلد از جان  
گفت ار نی غافل  
پیوسته بر او گر دل بیدار برآمد  
کاو رشته جان شد

(MSS 09, 313a)

I said: “what shall I do for love so that it does not leave my soul?  
He said: “If you are not negligent,  
If the heart is constantly awake for love,  
Then it becomes a thread of the soul”.

In addition to the previously discussed forms of spiritual meditation, such as remembrance (*dhikr*), supplementary prayer (*du‘ā’*), ritual prayer (*namāz*), forty days of extreme meditation (*chilla-nishīnī*) and devotional music (*qasā’id-khwānī*), he asserts that one of the most important techniques of keeping the heart constantly alert is to weep so that the

lover's eyes can see nothing but the image of the Beloved perceived by the heart:

بگفتم در علاج عاشقان چیست      بگفتا دیده تر باد و تر باد  
 بگفتم رفت چون بر کوی نلدار      بگفتا پای گر سر باد و سر باد  
 (MSS 09, 241a)

I said: “What is the remedy for the lovers?”  
 He said: “to have wet eyes and wet eyes”.  
 I said: “How to walk in the path of the Beloved?”  
 He said: “Walk as if your head were legs!”

‘Walking in the head’ generally symbolises one’s great effort and desire to achieve a pre-formed aim, despite any circumstances that may arise during the progression towards the target. In the mystical context, in terms of the state of complete commitment to the path of love, the lover, in order to reach the court of love, uses all of his/her physical and mental capacity to be worthy of the Beloved.

Being worthy of the Beloved, however, demands far greater effort from the lover than simply crying. Mubārak is convinced that, in order to test the sincerity of the love for the Beloved, the lover has to weep until blood emerges out of the eyes rather than tears:

گفتم به خدا مهر چه سازم که فزون شد  
 گفتا که بگریش  
 آن دم که ز دل دیده خون بار برآمد  
 از مهر در آن شد  
 (MSS 09, 313a)

I asked: “How can I increase my love for God?”  
 He said: “Cry to Him,  
 When an eye of blood pours forth from your heart,  
 Then it is filled with affection”.

After being convinced by the solutions given in the self-articulated dialogue, he realises the symbolic significance of weeping as the original technique for the preservation and enhancement of the divine love in the

human heart since its physical birth. Crying, as the first sign of physical life in a newborn baby, is the first sign of the human soul's sorrow at the separation from its origin; it is the first sign of God's remembrance in the human heart. Mubārak, therefore, insists that weeping is one of the essential ways of easing the sorrow of separation and purifying the heart to receive nothing but God's love. Contrary to some Islamic mystics, like Khayyām, who regard love as a silent process of human spiritual experience that need to be kept secretly in the heart,<sup>22</sup> Mubārak argues that love has to be loudly wept over and expressed, and that silence is not the symbol of a lover:

ز جوی چشم فواری روان کن	چو میل عشق گر داری فغان کن
به وصف عاشقان دفتر بیان کن	رموز عاشقان نبود خموشی
رضای دوست گر خواهی به جان کن	به پای عشق جز زاری نیفتند
ز مژگانت به هر تاری روان کن	چو خواهی آب پاشی آستانش

(MSS 09, 268b)

If you have a desire for love, then clamour,  
 Let flow tears from the river of your eyes!  
 Silence is not the symbol of the lovers,  
 Compose a book in the praise of the lovers.  
 Love accepts naught, but groaning,  
 If you want the beloved's satisfaction,  
 Then gain it with the heart.  
 If you want to water His doorway,  
 Let tears flow from each of your eye.

### 3.4. THE BELOVED

It is worth recognising that there is a dualism in Mubārak's thoughts regarding the role of the beloved, His names and attributes. On the one hand, it is the language and symbolism of Sufism that enables Mubārak to express his deepest thoughts and emotions regarding the dearness of the beloved as well as his own commitment to being a lover in the path to God. It is only through the poetic language of Sufism that the whole essence of the Almighty, as the essence of the universe, is describable

and His extraordinary beauty, as the beloved, can be seen. On the other hand, it is the Ismā'īlī anthropocentrism that provides Mubārak with a concrete idea of the eternal manifestation of the divine light in the concept of the Imam of the time, where his object of love can perfectly be inserted. Before discussing this, however, it is important to emphasise that Ismā'īlī theology alone, even with its esoteric concept of God, will not, in ideological terms, permit Mubārak to go beyond what can possibly be said about one's spiritual experience, and about the wholeness of the divine presence in one's heart. Sometimes Mubārak talks to his beloved in a very romantic manner rather like he was flirting with a girl for amusement or pleasure. For instance, in the poetry explored below, he passionately describes how the first amorous look of the beloved subjugated his heart. For the beloved's graceful movement he offers not only his eyes as the footsteps, but also his life as a reward.

بخارام ناز تو میرم      به نوای راز تو میرم  
پی وجود و ساز تو میرم      که تو گویی مرد برای ما  
(MSS 09, 265a)

Walk gracefully and let me die for your coquetry,  
For the secret of your affection, let me die,  
In the tune with your ecstasy, let me died,  
So as you may say, 'he died for us'.

Mubārak employs several Arabo-Persian names well known in the Sufi context for the beloved (*ma'shūq*), such as 'the King of the kings of love' (*shāhan-shāh-i 'ishq*), soulmate (*jūra-jān*, *yār*), friend (*dūst*), idol (*sanam*), joyful (*shūkh*), the possessor of the heart (*dildār*) and sweetheart (*nigār*). Nonetheless, from a different perspective, all of these symbolic nicknames tend to refer to the indirect but concrete object of his love, the Imam of the Time (*Imām-i Zamān*), of whose love he is very cautious of speaking directly. There are at least two main reasons for his caution about unveiling the true name of his beloved. Firstly, as Mubārak himself asserts, it is not customary for lovers to reveal the true name of their beloved publicly, preferring, rather, to recite His name

silently (*khafī*). He, however, suggests that those lovers who are keen to determine the true ‘deity of the world’ (*ma‘bud-i jahān*) should recognise the Imam referred to as ‘the unity of time and age’ (*wahdat-i ‘asr-u zamān*):

نزید هم که معشوقی عیان کن سرت هر تار از مويت روان کن نظر بر وحدت عصر و زمان کن	ندارد نسبتی غفلت به عاشق خدا خفیة به قرآن تزریا گفت به معبد جهانی گر طلبگار
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(MSS 09, 268b)

Negligence does not have any relation to the lover,  
 And it is not appropriate to unveil the beloved.  
 Remembrance has to be silent as God says in the Qur’ān,  
 So make it with each hair of your head.  
 If you are a seeker of the deity of the world,  
 Then look at the unity of age and time!

Hence, while arguing for a veil to cover the beloved’s face as a precautionary means of observing the custom of lovers, at the same time, he does not hesitate to insist on one’s effort to discover the object of love not only as an abstract mystery existing in the lovers’ imagination, but also as a concrete reality embodied in the persona of the Imam of the Time. Secondly, the dichotomous nature of the Ismā‘īlī theology is based on the esoteric (*bāṭin*) and exoteric (*zāhir*) principles that automatically deprives Mubārak of a direct reference to the Imam as the source of love as well as the beloved. According to the Ismā‘īlī exoteric principle, the *Imām-i Zamān*, who is believed to be the direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his cousin and son-in-law ‘Alī, also referred to as ‘our Lord’ (*Mawlānā*), is regarded as the preserver of the spiritual sense of the divine revelation. In Ismā‘īlī thought, humankind is always in need of a divinely guided individual drawn from their midst and, therefore, there is always an Imam from the Prophet’s family (*ahl al-bayt*) available to provide his followers with a path to God and bridge the gap between the two. In the esoteric realm, however, the personality of the Imam is idealised and many attributes of God are embedded in

him. Likewise, each Imam is regarded as the continuous chain of divine light that was embedded in ‘Alī after the Prophet. In short, it is believed that each Imam is actually the ‘Alī of his time (*‘Alī-yi Zamān-i Khwīsh*) in the spiritual realm, but in a different body. The Imam’s physical death is literally interpreted as ‘the changing of cloth’ (*jāma badal kardan*). In some remote Ismā’ilī communities, like Pamir, where the Imam ‘physically’ (*jismānī*) had never visited until the last decade of the twentieth century, he was regarded as God Himself.<sup>23</sup> This idea is clearly expressed in Mubārak’s works, especially in the *Chihil Dunyā*, discussed in the next chapter. He not only indirectly refers to ‘Alī as the manifestation of divine light, but also makes very strong and direct claims about ‘Ali’s divinity and transcendent power. There is a theoretical justification in the Ismā’ilī doctrines of its various historical periods for the love of Imam; it is sometimes described as one of the key duties of the believers. Likewise, the Imam shows both paternal and maternal love towards his spiritual children. For instance, al-Qādī al-Nū’mān, the famous Fātimid chief missionary (*dā‘ī al- dū‘āt*) and chief judge (*qādī al-quḍāt*), in ‘Code of Conduct for the Followers of Imam’, while interpreting the following Qur’ānic verse, “I do not ask for any remuneration excepting love for my kith and kin” (42: 23), asserts that the love of God means love for the Prophet’s *ahl al-bayt* and that “those who love the Imams should be sincere in their love towards them and should pay them their dues. It is the duty of the lover to love his beloved with sincerity”.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, as argued throughout this study, Mubārak’s love is far stronger and more spiritually passionate than the love that the Ismā’ilī teaching requires from a faithful believer (*mū’min*), who already knows his/her Imam in the realm of physical attributes, but aims to have a visionary spiritual meeting (*dīdār*) with the Imam. For Mubārak, the Imam, as the realm of divine unity, is the source of love as well as the beloved. His love is a Sufi type of selfless devotion towards becoming like the beloved and being annihilated (*fanā’*) in His divine essence. For lovers like him, who are merely concerned with the realm of spiritual dimensions, the quest for the true essence of the beloved does not end until the court of ‘the King of the kings of love’ (*shāhan-shāh-i ‘ishq*) is

discovered and spiritual happiness is attained. To achieve this, the lover has not only to get rid of his body, but also be ready to subdue his soul for ‘the soul of the soul’ (*jān-i jān*). He argues that the reason why some of the lovers of the Imam are confused by the dualist nature of the *zāhir-bātin* principle is because they do not have the courage to maintain the balance between their words and their deeds:

شاہنشاہ عشق را بلند است به مکان      خواهی که بدو رسی گذر از سر و جان  
 چشم غلط تحریر اینجا ز دویست      لغزیدن پا حقیقت از وهم و گمان  
 طینت به زبان چو صادق القول کنی      ظاهر همه با تو دید و باطن نگران  
 (MSS 09, 272b)

The kingdom of the King of the kings of love is very high,  
 If you want to reach Him, then get rid of your head and soul.  
 But your eyes are confusingly misleading because of dualism,  
 Your feet are slipping because of illusion and doubt.  
 When you faithfully merge your tongue with your deeds,  
 Then you will see both the *zāhir* and the *bātin*.

When the seekers reach the supreme King of love, their hearts are charged with an extraordinary spiritual power (*himmat*) which allows them to experience love as the manifestation of the divine in the material realm. In other words, divine love gives the lovers, who are also known as ‘the possessors of the heart’ (*śāhib dilān*) in Persian Sufi literature, a theophanic vision to see and feel beyond seeing and feeling, and gain an intimation of the ultimate truth:

خاک قدم نگار تا دیده کشید      اسرار ز هر چه بود نهان گشت پدید  
 دل را نظر انقدر برافتاد بر او      چشم نظری که هرگزش دیده ندید  
 (MSS 09, 353b)

When the footstep dust of the beloved was applied as eye makeup  
 All the hidden secrets were unveiled.  
 The heart perceived him to an extent,  
 That a look of the eye, such as the sight had never seen.

The idea of being attracted to the divine beauty through the look of the heart involves a deeper imagination of the Beloved’s response to the

lover's attention. Sometimes it makes the lover lose patience and even the taste of love before the Beloved's response:

تا غنچه ز سرو قامنت خندان شد چون او نظرم گرفته دل گریان شد  
هر چند که سوختم دل و دیده بر او تارفت مذاق و لعل او خندان شد  
(MSS 09, 349a)

Ever since a bud blossomed from the cypress of your height,  
It caught my eyes and made the heart to cry.  
No matter how much my heart was burning for Him,  
His lips smiled not until I lost the taste.

### 3.5. THE GUIDE

Let us now consider who initiated Mubārak to the Sufi path towards spiritual happiness, and ask how he regards the role of a guide in the way towards spiritual progress (*sulūk*). An examination of his works reveals that he did not have a living or physically present guide in the sense of a Sufi *pīr* or *shaykh* to initiate him into the mystical path of gnosis (*ma‘rifat*) and love (*muḥabbat*). It is true that there were several *pīrs* important in Pamir during the time of Mubārak, as discussed in chapter 1. Nonetheless, these *pīrs* were Ismā‘ilī regional religious leaders, whose supreme obligation was to teach the particular community (*jamā‘at*) under their supervision the basic principles of the Ismā‘ilī faith and interpret the Imam's instructions (*farmāns*), rather than to initiate them into the Sufi path. It is said that Mubārak, as a learned man of his time, was greatly respected among the local Ismā‘ilī *pīrs* of Wakhān and Zebāk. He was the bright of their sessions (*sham‘-i mahfil*), yet as far as his personal quest for the ultimate truth was concerned, none of these *pīrs* were directly associated with his Sufi tendency. Likewise, Mubārak never mentions any of them as guides in his Sufi spiritual progression. His concept of a spiritual guide, therefore, has a dichotomous meaning and application regarding the particular religious context in which he existed. On the one hand, there was a physical *pīr* (Yāqūt Shāh, and later his son, Shāh-zāda Lays from Zebāk) appointed by the Imam, of whom Mubārak, as an Ismā‘ilī fellow, was a

*murīd* (disciple). On the other hand, however, as a Sufi devotee, his source of spiritual inspiration (*ilhām*) tended to be an obstruct phenomenon from his own world of spirituality: a mysterious (*ghaybī*) messenger resembling Khiḍr, who updates his knowledge of God and through love, leads Mubārak towards eternity. This perception of a guide resembles that of the Uvaysī Sufis, who unlike the other Sufi orders, do not have living guides and whose source of initiation are the spirits of the Prophet, any of the four rightly guided caliphs (*al-khulafā al-rāshidūn*, i.e., Abubakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī), a deceased Shaykh or Khiḍr.<sup>25</sup> In the following *rubā’ī*, Mubārak, while addressing a novice, asserts that walking in the path of love without a guide is like walking on a dark night without a light; the ruby red colour of the beloved’s lips, the source of life, would be dark if there is no Khidr to illuminate the world:

The garnet of the beloved's lips is the source of life,  
But the house of darkness is obscure at the night.  
If you want Khidr to show you the path to the beloved,  
Then purify the mirror of your heart from the rusty dust.

The purity of heart, which Mubārak defines as the condition for guidance, symbolises one's strong commitment to and awareness of the chosen path. Khiḍr here, therefore, does not represent only a mystic Prophet, who appears from nowhere (*ghayb*) in order to guide a lost believer towards the right path, but also stands for one's own innermost consciousness, itself activated by the intellectual power (*himmat*) of the heart:

ما کافته‌ایم در جهان صورت پار  
جز نیست که جان و دل خبر یافت ز کس پیداست میان جان و دل خصلت کار  
(MSS 09, 355b)

We search for the image of the beloved in the world,  
But we find the beloved's solitude instead.

Except the heart and soul nothing is aware of oneself,  
The secret, therefore, lies between the heart and the soul.

He always seeks guidance from his inner consciousness whenever there is a need for him to find an answer to a particular question concerning his spiritual quest. Sometimes, during his spiritual sessions, he engages in a faithful discourse not only with Khidr, but also even with the highest power of the suprasensory world: God, the supreme guide and the source of guidance. He argues that one's own inner consciousness becomes aware of divine knowledge only through the grace (*fadl*) and will (*khwāst*) of God, whose lesson (*sabaq*) and guidance (*hidāyat*) then becomes more specific in the form of a divine revelation and through the divine light manifested in the Prophet Muhammad, 'Alī, and consequently in the never ending chain of the Ismā'īlī Imams. In the exoteric realm, the Ismā'īlī Imams believed to be as the only legitimate guides, whose religious authority is authenticated through the Prophet Muhammad as the messenger of the divine revelation, and 'Alī as 'the gate-way' of knowledge.<sup>26</sup> In the following *mustazād*, articulated in the form of an active expressive dialogue, Mubārak finds an answer to his question concerning the guidance from God, who directs him towards the Prophet as the true knower of the esoteric and exoteric qualities:

گفتم ز پی وصل چهارت به دوان بود  
گفتا به یقین آی  
گفتم نتوانم به خود این مرحله پرداخت  
گفتا بلدی جوی  
گفتم صفت ظاهر و باطن به که دارد  
گفتا که پیغمبر  
جز نیست کش قابل کردار برآمد  
مکشوف جهان شد

(MSS 09, 313a)

I said: "For the sake of union, how can I follow you?"

He said: "be certain!"

I said: "I am not able to accomplish it at this stage alone".

He said: "Look for a guide!"

I said: "Who knows the attributes of *zāhir* and *bātin*?"

He said: “The Prophet,  
Nobody apart from him is qualified,  
He is the discoverer of the universe.

Accordingly the Prophet is seen as the first discoverer and interpreter of both the exoteric and esoteric meanings of the divine revelation. Yet, the true master of the science of certainty (*şâhib-i ‘ilm-i yaqîn*) and the provider of the divinely graced knowledge (*ta’yîd*) is ‘Alî. In the *Chihil Dunyâ*, referring to the Prophet and ‘Alî by their most famous nicknames, Muṣṭafâ and Murtâdâ, Mubârak attempts to demonstrate the superiority of ‘Alî in the spiritual sense by describing him as the soul or the inner meaning of the religious life, and the Prophet as the body or symbol of the religious rules and customs. Likewise, the Prophet’s role is restricted to being the knower of the divine secret while ‘Alî’s importance is defined as the divine secret itself:

مرتضی جان و مصطفی جسم است      مرتضی ذات و مصطفی اسم است  
سنت ذات مصطفی داند                  مرتضی را به جز خدا داند

(MSS 08, 37)

Murtâdâ is the soul and Muṣṭafâ is the body,  
Murtâdâ is the origin and Muṣṭafâ is the name.  
Muṣṭafâ knows the origin of the tradition,  
Murtâdâ is known, but only to God.

It is ‘Alî, who, Mubârak believes, knows the secret of divine knowledge and shares it precisely with the two categories of the believers, namely the lovers (*‘âshiqân*) and the gnostics (*‘ârifân*), who are keen to recognise the true meaning of the divine revelation through *ma’rifat* and *muḥabbat*. In the *Chihil Dunyâ* ‘Alî is described as the sinless (*ma’šûm*) deity and is presented as the only true guide on the path to Truth (*râh-i haqq*):

سر و پا میجوی ندارد او عیب او یگانه خداست بی شک و ریب  
علم تاییدش عاشقان سبقند زانکشان عارفان راه حفند  
(MSS 08, 29)

He is free from sin in any account you look for,  
 He is the unique God without any doubt and suspicions.  
 His science of *ta'yid* is the lovers' lesson,  
 For they are the seekers of the path to Truth.

Hence, it is true that the spirit or the light of ‘Alī was the source of mystical initiation and spiritual inspiration for Mubārak. His concept of a guide tends to be very close to that of the Uvaysī Sufis, just as his main object of the divine inspiration theoretically resembles that of the numerous Sufi orders, whose chain of spiritual guides commences with the name of ‘Alī.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, it would be wrong to dismiss some of the fundamental differences between his approach to the role and importance of a guide and that of either the Uvaysis or the ‘Alī-oriented Sufi orders. As for the latter, it is sufficient to note that, in addition to the fact that they have a very strong idea about the position of a living guide in the initiation of a novice to the path, there are two key elements in the Ismā‘ilī esoteric concept of a guide that distinguishes these two. Firstly, contrary to the Ismā‘ilī principle of guidance, strictly based on the premises of the Prophet’s *ahl al-bayt*, any Sufi who possesses sufficient knowledge of the path and successfully passes through certain procedures of spiritual progression can be a *murshid*. Secondly, although many Shaykhs claim to connect their family line to some of the Prophet’s relatives, companions and the Shī‘ī Imams, the Ismā‘ilī idea of the continuous chain of guidance, based on the hereditary principles, has no doctrinal significance for them.

In order to determine the technical difference between Mubārak’s understanding of the initiation inspired by the spiritual presence of a certain guide and that of the Uvaysis, one has to make a clear distinction between the notions of a physically absent Imam and a deceased Shaykh, whose spirits apparently serve as the means of guidance. In both cases, the guide is not physically present to lead his novices, but unlike the Uvaysī Shaykh, Mubārak’s guide is a living person. The Ismā‘ilī Imam is regarded by him as the manifestation of the divine light and the embodiment of the spirit of ‘Alī in the realm of spirituality. Moreover, the difference between Mubārak’s spiritual guide and the Uvaysī *murshid* is that

the latter is supposed to lead his aspirant (*murīd*) to the ultimate truth while the former, while leading to the truth, is himself regarded as the truth.<sup>28</sup> From the Ismā‘īlī esoteric point of view, the Imam is believed to be the ‘speaking’ (*nātiq*) Qur’ān, whose significance even goes beyond the ‘silent’ (*ṣāmit*) Qur’ān (i.e., the scripture). Accordingly, unlike the Sufi *murshids*, described as the passive receivers of the divine revelation, the Imam is regarded as the active master of the Qur’ānic *ta’wīl* (spiritual exegesis) and the true holder of the divine secret.<sup>29</sup> The Imam is described by Mubārak as the source of true knowledge (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*) and the object of love; he is the knower (*dānā*) as well as the beloved (*ma’shūq*), whose spiritual vision (*dīdār*) he attempts to gain. In the following *ghazal*, dedicated to one of the first two Imams of his time, Shāh ‘Alī Shāh (the first Aga Khan d.1881), Mubārak describes the Imam as source of knowledge, the treasure of religious mystery and the pole (*qibla*) of the men of art (*hunar*):

نقطه اسرار و فهم شاه سید الحسن  
کاشف ملک الیقین شاه سید الحسن  
صاحب تیغ دو سر شاه سید الحسن

مظہر جود و عدم خادم لوح و قلم  
مظہر بحر یقین معدن اسرار و دین  
جوہر شمس و قمر قبلہ اہل هنر

(MSS 11, 39)

The manifestation of being and non-being, the custodian of the Tablet and the Pen,  
The point of secrets and comprehension is Shāh Sayyid al-Ḥasan.  
The manifestation of the divine sea of certainty and the mine of religious mystery,  
The discoverer of the world of certainty is Shāh Sayyid al-Ḥasan.  
The substance of the Sun and the Moon, the pole of men of art,  
The owner of the ‘double edged sword’<sup>30</sup> is Shāh Sayyid al-Ḥasan.

Thus, Mubārak’s concept of guidance is a two-dimensional mystical perception of discovering a decisive way for attaining spiritual happiness, based on the Ismā‘īlī esoteric principle of spiritual guidance, and implemented in the Sufi manner of a quest for meaning.

## ENDNOTES

1. Rahman at-Tarjumana, ed. and trans., *The Tawāṣīn of Maṇṣūr al-Ḥallāj*, (Berkeley: Diwan Press, 1974).
2. This *qīṭ’ā* is from a folio that I discovered in the private collection of *khalīfa* Mahmadbek in Yamg. It is a single folio where, in addition to the *qīṭ’ā*, other *rubā’īs* belonging to Mubārak are written. Although one cannot be sure about the origin of the folio, it seems that it might be from Mubārak’s personal notes, as it does not appear anywhere else in his works.
3. For a recent edition of the *ḥadīth-i qudsī*, refer to Abdassamad Clarke, trans., *The Complete Forty Hadīth / Imam an-Nawawi* (London: Ta-Ha Publisher Ltd, 2000).
4. For more details on the differences between ‘ilm and ma‘rifat, see Reza Shah Kazemi, “The Notion and Significance of Ma‘rifa in Sufism.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 13, no. 2 (2002): 155–181.
5. This Qur’ānic expression (7:172) is generally interpreted in mystical Islamic contexts as the primordial covenant (of Alast) between God and men in which the divine-human relationship is established prior to the creation on the basis of God’s question: “Am I not your Lord?” and the humans answer ‘Yes, we testify’.
6. For Ja‘far Ṣādiq’s twelve springs of gnosis, see Carl Ernst, “The Stages of Love in Early Persian Sufism, from Rābi‘a to Ruzbihān,” in *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origins to Rumi (700–1300)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 437–438.
7. This is a Qur’ānic passage (55:20).
8. John Cooper, “Rūmī and Ḥikmat: Towards a Reading of Sabziwārī’s Commentary on the Mathnawī,” in *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origin to Rumi (700–1300)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford, One World, 1999), 409.
9. For a more recent study on Rūmī-Shams relations, see David Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West* (Oxford: One World, 2001), 134–200.
10. The story was recorded in August 2003 from Jumaqul Davlatqadamov in Yamg.
11. For the verses, see M. Azarizdī, ed. *Matn-i Kāmil-i Mathnaw-yi Rūmī az rūyi tab’i Nicholson* (Tehran, 1995), 5.

بشنو از نی چون حکایت می‌کند و از جداییها شکایت می‌کند  
 کز نیستان تا مرا ببریده اند از نفیرم مرد و زن نالبده اند

Listen to the reed, how it tells a tale,  
Complaining of separation—saying,  
Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed,  
My lament has caused men and women to moan

12. Bīdil and his style called ‘bīdilism’, characterised by its strong sense of metaphor and complicity of poetic expression, is famous in Tajik-Darī-speaking literary milieu of Transoxiana, Afghanistan and Indian subcontinent since the seventeenth century. For more details, see Kamal Aynī, *Bīdil i Ego Irfan* (Dushanbe, 1956).
13. For Bīdil’s poetry, see Arif Nushahi, ed., *Kulliyāt-i Mirzā ‘Abd al-Qādir-i Bīdil: muntakhabī ghazaliyāt va rubā‘īyāt va hikāyāt va ishārāt*, (Lahur: sal-Ma‘rifa, 1978).
14. For Hāfiẓ’s poetry, see Khalil Rahbar, ed., *Dīvān-i Ghazaliyāt-i Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Hāfiẓ-i Shīrāzī* (Tehran: Safi ‘Alī Shāh, 1985).
15. William Stoddart, *Sufism: The Mystical Doctrine and Methods of Islam* (London, 1976), 83.
16. Jawad Nurbakhsh, *Love* (London: Khānaqāhi Ni’matullāhī Publications, 1976), 6.
17. For instance, in *Mathnawī* (1112), Rūmī confesses: “No matter what I say to explain and elucidate love, shame overcomes when I come to Love itself”, or in *Dīvān* (29050–51), answering the question concerning love’s definition, he says: “Someone asked, ‘What is Love?’ I replied ‘Ask not about these meanings’. When you become like me, then you will know. When he calls you, you will recite its tale”. For a detailed explanation of these and other love poems of Rūmī, refer to William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 1984), 195.
18. For Rābi‘ya’s idea of selfless love, see Margaret Smith, *Rāb‘ia the Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
19. For this *ḥadīth* and its various interpretations see Johann Bürgel and Alma Giese, eds., *God Is Love and Loves Beauty: Essays Presented to Annemarie Schimmel*, (Leiden: Peter Lang, 1994).
20. Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), 53.

21. This verse is from *Dīvān-i Shams*, a famous collection of Rūmī’s poetry found in Badakhshan, which is sung as a *madō*:

چشم بکشاو ببین جمله کلام الله را  
آیت آیت همگی معنی قرآن ادب است

22. In one of his *rubā’īs* Khayyām says:

عشق آن نبود که همچو بلبل نالی  
هر گه که بمیری و ننالی عشق است

“It is not love when you grieve like a nightingale, dying without a cry is love”. The Persian version of the *rubā’ī* is from Mirzoev and Zand, eds., *Rubā’īyat-i ‘Umar-i Khayyām* (Stalinobod: Nashriyāt-i Davlati-yi Tājikistān, 1950), 125.

23. The first visit of the Ismā‘ilī Imam (His Highness the Aga Khan IV) to Pamir occurred on May 25, 1995, almost a thousand years after the region’s conversion to Ismā‘ilism. This day was proclaimed as the national day of light (*rūz-i nūr*) in VMKB and since then has been celebrated throughout the region as the festival of *dīdār*.

24. Jawad Muscati and Khan Bahadur Moulvi, trans., *Selection from Qazi Noamon’s Kitab ul-Himma fi Abadi Ataba-el a’emma; or Code of Conduct for the Followers of Imam* (Karachi: Ismaili Association for Pakistan, 1950), 23.

25. For the concept of a guide in Uvaysī Sufism, see Johan G. J. Ter Haar, “The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order” in *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, vol. 2 (Oxford: One World, 1999), 311–321.

26. This refers to one of the famous Shī‘ī versions of the Prophetic tradition, where Muhammad says: “I am the city of knowledge and ‘Alī is its gate. If anyone wants to visit the city, he must first enter through the gate”. See Kulaynī, 135.

27. According to the accounts of Nasr, almost all Sufi orders regard ‘Alī as the first master of their path. See Sayyed Hosain Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1991).

28. Al-Ṭūsī in ‘The Paradise of Submission’ puts it as follows: “The devotees of the rightly guided mission (i.e., Ismā‘ilis) consider him to be the truthful master (*muhiqq*). Truth without him is infidelity (*kufr*), and [to recognise the

truth] besides him is to ascribe partners to God (*shirk*)". See Badakhchani, 119.

29. This claim is usually justified on the bases of a Qur'ānic passage (11:27), which is believed to be addressed to the Imam of the Time: "And over every man of knowledge there is the one who knows".
30. It is traditionally believed that 'Alī's sword, called *Zulfiqār*, was a double blade weapon of magic nature.



# CHAPTER 4

## *CHIHL DUNYĀ:* THE WORLD OF DIVINE SECRETS



### 4.1. THE TEXT, ITS GENRE AND STYLISTIC STRUCTURE

The full name of the poem is *Risāla-yi Chihil Dunyā* (Treatise of the Forty Worlds), whose original version, together with the *Qatrat al-Bahr*, constitutes an omnibus of the MSS.008 and is preserved in the private collection of Hasan Abdulakhonov from Yamg. Unsurprisingly, the treatise was copied several times and, therefore, manuscripts can be found in various private collections in different parts of Badakhshan. I found three earlier copies of the manuscript, probably made by Mubārak's students for their personal use. There is little difference between the original manuscript and the copies, except for variations in the calligraphic styles and a few grammatical errors that appear in the later editions. The subject of our examination, therefore, is the original work, which was compiled in the lunar year of 1320 (1890), as its concluding paragraph suggests. It is a relatively short treatise, consisting of 747 *bayts*.

(distiches)'. The language of the poem, although it employs a sophisticated Arabo-Persian vocabulary, is closely related to the Badakhshani dialect of the Tajik language with its specific vernacular form of story narration in which the grammatical rules of standard Persian are sometimes challenged and several archaic words are employed. Doctrinally, nevertheless, the poem is predominated by Sufi-Ismā‘ilī terminology. In the expressive mood, the author addresses his message through three main speakers as the three essential points of view about this articulated discourse: namely, himself as the narrator; the characters (the six law giving prophets) from whose perspective the myth is told; and the main hero (i.e., ‘Alī), who narrates the story in the first person.

The treatise is a didactic narrative poem (*dāstān*) composed in a panegyric (*madīha*) form, whose rhyme-pattern resembles that of the *mathnavī* (*a a, b b, c c*, etc.). The subject matter of the poem is a historical person of Shī‘ī significance: ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, whose spiritual function is commendably exaggerated beyond the human essence and capacity through allegorical depictions, but within the religious context of the historic development of Islam. As its stylistic features indicate, the poem is, thus, an argumentative religious discourse, in which the sanctity of ‘Alī as a primordial as well as perpetual divine figure is justified and his absolute religious authority is postulated on the bases of a general monotheistic theological discourse.

#### **4.2. THE THEMATIC STRUCTURE AND PARAPHRASABLE CONTENT**

The text of the *Chihil Dunyā* is very well organised in the sense of the structural division of its chapters and their thematic implications that logically suit the arguments provided. It consists of six subchapters, referred to as ‘testimonies’ (*shahādat*), numbered from one to six respectively, four chapters (*fasl*) and two concluding parts (*qism*) each of which deals with a specific topic but flows as a continuation of previous ideas. By dividing the poem into three different categories, Mubārak draws a fundamental distinction between the importance of the conveyed messages and the styles of the literary expressions. For instance, the

language of the first part, containing the testimonies of the six prophets with resolutions (*anbiyā'-i ūl-u al-'azm*) or the masters of divine revelation (*sāhib-i wahy*), is a demonstrative monologue, in which each speaker testifies to the main argument proposed by the author. Thus, the six eminent prophets give personal evidence to authenticate the sanctity of 'Alī as the King of Sainthood (*Shāh-i Wilāyat*). As was mentioned in chapter 1, the term *wilāyat*, which is derived from the Arabic word *walī*, has various terminological implications in this work. In the first five subchapters and the chapters, the discourse is mainly focused on the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) dimensions of the subject and tends to represent "the divine kingdom of 'Alī" in which he is the king (*shāh*). In other words, the literal translation of the word *wilāyat*, whose root is the verb *waliya* (to govern), perfectly matches Mubārak's application of it as the spiritual kingdom of 'Alī. Nevertheless, in the prologue to subchapter 6 and the remaining chapters with an exoteric (*zāhir*) agenda, the term stands for the Shī'ī concept of the Imamate (*Imāmat*) as the second (after *nubuwat* or prophethood) and eternal phase of the cycle of occultation (*dawr al-satr*) in the religious universe ('ālam-i dīn). Here, therefore, the terminological application of the term *wilāyat* is based on the *Chihil Dunyā*'s perspective. The chapters are mostly composed in the form of allegorical tales in which an expressive discourse is centred on a single theme—the ascent (*Mī'rāj*) of the Prophet Muhammad to the mysterious forty worlds. The verbal communication in the final part of the treatise, nevertheless, is evocative, as the author aims to persuade the reader of the righteousness of his articulated arguments; that is, the significance of the Imamate as an eternal institution of human guidance. These points will be discussed later, but for now it suffices to present a list of contents as they occur in the poem:

1. The first testimony (Adam) on the kingdom of 'Alī (17 distiches)
2. The second testimony (Noah) on the kingdom of 'Alī (8 distiches)
3. The third testimony (Abraham) on the kingdom of 'Alī (13 distiches)
4. The fourth testimony (Moses) on the kingdom of 'Alī (12 distiches)
5. The fifth testimony (Jesus) on the kingdom of 'Alī (36 distiches)

6. The sixth testimony (Muhammad) on the kingdom of 'Alī (92 distiches)
7. Chapter 1: on the revelation brought by Gabriel from the Almighty Lord to the Prophet, may peace be upon his mentioning, and the Prophet's journey towards the mountain of Qāf through the permission and blessing of God and the company of *Shāh-i Wilāyat*, and discovering the advantages of the forty worlds with the help and power of the 'Alī of the time, the most remembered one (71 distiches).
8. Chapter 2: on the response of the Prophet, may God's peace be upon him and his family, to the ring [of 'Alī], and completing a thousand-year journey instantaneously, and the Prophet's meeting with *Shāh-i Wilāyat* over there (156 distiches).
9. Chapter 3: *Shāh-i Wilāyat* unveils the mysteries of the other thirty nine worlds to the Prophet, and the Prophet's wondering around those worlds (144 distiches).
10. Chapter 4: *Shāh-i Wilāyat* commands the wind to take the Prophet back to his state (*maqām*), and the Prophet, upon his return, delivers the ring to Fāṭima al-Fāṭir and dreams about *Shāh-i Wilāyat* (89 distiches).
11. The Prophet (*nabī*) said: "If the world were devoid of an Imam, even for a moment, it would perish with all its inhabitants" (7 distiches).
12. The Prophet said: "Whoever dies without recognising the Imam of the Time, his death will be that of an ignorant one and the place of the ignorant is hell" (102 distiches).<sup>2</sup>

As far as the allusion to the *Chihil Dunyā* is concerned, one can observe three types of direct and indirect references in the work, each of which aim to support Mubārak's argumentative discourse. These are the Qur'ān (3 direct quotations), the Shī'ī version of the prophetic tradition (4 famous *aḥādīth*) the Sufi authorities (Rumī, Hāfiẓ and Bīdil), and indigenous Pamiri stories, which are discussed in the following chapters.

#### 4.3. THE MAIN ARGUMENT AND THE MAJOR THEMES

Although the *Chihil Dunyā* is composed in a mystical spirit and touches upon several Sufi themes, it is the Pamiri religious dimension of Ismā‘īlism that is most clearly illuminated through the form and content of this treatise. At the heart of this dimension lies the common Ismā‘īlī esoteric doctrine of the six days of the creation of the religious universe ('ālam al-dīn), manifested in the six periods of the cycle of occultation (*dawr al-satr*) on earth, represented by the six law-giving prophets, namely Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, and its completion on the seventh day (i.e., the day of resurrection) by the Imam of the Resurrection (*Qā'īm al-Qiyāmat*). Mubārak proposes, however, that ‘Alī, as the symbol of Imamate, is not merely the representative of the seventh day, but also the core substance (*jawhar*) of the entire cycle of prophecy and the celestial man of the preceding cycle of the epiphany (*dawr al-kashf*) in heaven. Likewise, he stresses the esoteric significance of the Imamate (*Imāmat*) as the eternal period in the religious universe that was concealed in the temporary phase of the prophethood (*nubuwwat*) until the time of Muhammad and unveiled after his death. Although each of the six eminent prophets testified to the sanctity of ‘Alī, it was Muhammad who, through his ascent (*Mīrāj*) to the forty worlds, realised the true essence of ‘Alī as the symbol of the divine secret. This argument explains Mubārak’s didactic purpose in assembling the *Chihil Dunyā* as a *Panj-Tanī* handbook and persuading the reader to conceive the esoteric meaning of the Prophet’s ascent as well as the superiority of ‘Alī in the realm of spirituality.

A cohesive examination of the *Chihil Dunyā* indicates that four major themes emerge in the poem that do not in any sense violate its wholeness as a treatise. Initially, then, the work is a long treatise, that is, a relatively lengthy poem on a specialised subject with narrative elements characterised by considerable unity and compression in all of its parts, namely the theme, plot, structure, character, settings and mood. The discourses that are elaborated around the four main themes provide the titles of the following subchapters of this study.

#### 4.4. THE TESTIMONIES OF THE SIX EMINENT PROPHETS

The framework for the discussion in the six subchapters of the poem is mainly built upon the general Islamic understanding of the Abrahamic religious discourse, in which the idea of the origination, continuation and completion of the divine revelation is approached from a mystical angle. Nevertheless, the content of the discussion has quite a different connotation to the Pamiri Ismā‘ilī agenda that deploys the general framework for the particular sectarian purpose: the elaboration of a polemic discourse concerning the divinity of ‘Alī. Each of the six eminent prophets testifies to the unity of the divine unique manifested in the person of ‘Alī as the light (*nūr*) or the spirit (*jān*) of God, preserved in the paradise until the creation of the human being in the form (*jism*) of Adam, as well as one of the most sacred divine names (*nām*) first taught to Adam. Mubārak argues that it was the divine light of ‘Alī, the Lord (*Mawlā*) that made Adam manifest himself (*padid āvard*) in human form, and that it was because of this light that the angels paid tribute to him. Importantly, the word *mawlā* in the Ismā‘ilī context mainly is applied either to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib or the other Imams and, therefore, throughout the *Chihil Dunyā*, this term is applied respectively:

د از او آدم صفری پیدا نور دیدی ملک که طالب شد	بود نور ولایت مولی هم بر آن نور سجدہ واجب شد
--	---

There was a light of *Mawlā*'s *Wilāyat*,  
 From which the Pure Adam emerged.  
 Bowing to that light became obligatory,  
 When the angels first saw and followed it.

Theorising the traditional approach to the issue of creation, Mubārak firstly emphasises the light of ‘Alī, sometimes referred to as the light of Abī Ṭālib,<sup>3</sup> as the source of spiritual illumination that is, paradoxically, exchanged with the common Islamic idea of the light of Muhammad as the first creature of God.<sup>4</sup> Although Muhammad, as the messenger of God (*rasulallāh*), as described in the *shahādah* (“There is no God, but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger”), does play a significant

role in bringing down (*nuzul*) the divine revelation (*wahy*), a function which also contradicts the mainstream idea concerning Gabriel being a mediator between God and the Prophet, and delivering (*rasānidan*) it to humankind,<sup>5</sup> his position has secondary importance, after ‘Alī, in Pamiri religious discourse in general and in the *Chihil Dunyā* in particular. This will be further discussed in relation to the Night Ascent’s (*Shab-i Mīrāj*) denouement and the second *Mīrāj* of the Prophet Muhammad. For now, let it suffice to discuss Mubārak’s point concerning the light of ‘Alī as the symbol of submission to the divine power (*qudrat-i ilāhī*) and to the institution that implements it: the Imamate. In the following verses quoted by Mubārak from, as he believes, the gnostics (*‘arifān*), he attempts to justify his argument concerning the reason for the angels’ submission to Adam:

سجود آدم خاکی از آن شد بر ملک واجب      که بوش بر جبین نور علی ابن ابی طالب  
نمیبود از ولایت گر شعاع پرتو وحدت      ملایک کی فرود آرد سر فخر اندرین قالب

The angels’ bow to the mortal Adam became mandatory,  
For the light of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib manifested in his forehead.  
If the *Wilāyat* did not possess the shining rays of unity,  
Why would the proud angels bow their heads to this body?

Secondly, he briefly mentions the process of mystical emanation in which there is God, whose light causes the creation or more correctly appearance (*padīd āmadan*) of Adam as a symbol of the physical world or the commencing point in the aforementioned six days of creation of the religious universe (*‘ālam-i dīn*) during the cycle of occultation (*dawr al-satr*).<sup>6</sup> The light itself, however, as the essence (*zāt*) of God, is described as beyond creation or existence. This is because, he claims, these factors are inapplicable to the divine essence, but depend solely upon the divine will (*khwāhish*) and command (*amr*); that is, in the words of the Qur’ān: “our command is but a single [act] like the twinkling of an eye” (54:50). Nevertheless, as Mubārak argues, there are six levels of emanation from the appearance to the perfection of the religious universe represented in the six eminent prophets until its completion in the time of the Imamate.

Proceeding to this, it should be noted that although Adam, in the context of the *Chihil Dunyā*, is not specified as any of the three known Adams in Ismā'īlī gnosis, namely, the first prophet of the cycle of *nubuwwat*, Adam the Pure (*Ādam-i ṣafī Allāh*), the universal primordial Adam (*Ādam al-awwal al-kullī*), and the spiritual Adam (*Ādam-i Ruwḥānī*) or the angel of humanity, rather, it generally refers to Adam as the first prophet as well as the first human being created by God out of divine love and for the purpose of divine recognition.<sup>7</sup> In his testimony (*shahādat*), therefore, Adam, as the first apostle of God, demonstrates his (1) knowledge (*dānish*) of the divine names (*asmā'*) among which 'Alī (lit. the highest) is the most significant; (2) recognition (*shinākht*) of the uniqueness of *Mawlā* (Lord) and *Mawlānā* ('our Lord' or 'Alī); and (3) submission (*itā'at*) to the divinity of the divine name ['Alī]. Mubārak applies these three points in Adam's testimony throughout his work. According to traditional accounts, each of the six eminent prophets were qualified in a particular area of divine names. Adam, for instance, was most distinguished in knowing them. Mubārak claims that, of the ninety-nine names of God, the most beautiful (*zibā*) and the most real (*haqqānī*) is that of 'Alī. Thus, Adam first learned this name from the Almighty and testified to its primordial essence (*zāt-i qadīm*):

به علیم خدای لم یزلى که قدیم است ذات پاک علی

I swear to the wise God of eternity,  
That the origin of 'Alī is pure and primordial.

Although Mubārak does not explicitly refer to any source for his mystical inspiration, one can see the implicit application of some Shī'ī *ahādīth* as the key point of his argument because 'Alī is believed to have said: "We are the most beautiful names of God and his majestic attributes. I am the supreme name and superlative attribute of God, hypostatised and individualised... I had known God before the creation of the heavens and earth".<sup>8</sup>

The second crucial argument in the *Chihil Dunyā* and a core principle of Ismā'īlī doctrine to which Adam testifies is the recognition of

the divine lordship of ‘Alī as the *Mawlā* (the Lord) or *Mawlānā* (lit. ‘Our lord’) of mankind. Of course, in the Islamic context, the application of the term *mawlā*, derived from the Arabic verb *walā* (to govern or to be near to), has various connotations depending on the particular historical, religious and cultural circumstances.<sup>9</sup> The Ismā‘īlīs, however, deploy these terms only to refer their Imams, whose line commences with the name of ‘Alī. In the *Chihil Dunyā*, the term is more explicitly applied as the name of God and, theoretically, it is justified by certain passages from the Qur’ān and the sayings of the Prophet.<sup>10</sup> Adam’s testimony, therefore, is fundamentally important to Mubārak’s debate on the divinity of ‘Alī in the realm of spirituality, since the creation of the physical world.

Now, when Mubārak clarifies Adam’s knowledge of the most significant name of God and his recognition of *Mawlā* as the true lord of humankind, he is attempting to enact a doctrinal foundation of submission to the divinity of that divine name. As explored above, the only reason for Mubārak to offer the angels’ bow to the newly created Adam was the manifestation of the light of ‘Alī that they saw in him, a divine light, which caused not only Adam’s creation, but also itself became the superlative essence of humanity.<sup>11</sup> He, therefore, argues that, since the time of Adam, this light has existed transcendently in all the prophets (in the realm of *zāhir*) until the end of the period of the *nubuwwat* was sealed by Muhammad, and eternally exists in the Imams (in the realm of *bātin*). Hence, what Mubārak attempts to establish is that the divine light, as the sign of the divine presence in human form, was incarnated in Adam and then passed on to Noah and that, after him, the light was encircled in the other prophets as it was simultaneously in the Ismā‘īlī Imams.<sup>12</sup> The constant manifestation of God was, therefore, inevitable in the *zāhirī* (exoteric) and the *bātinī* (esoteric) realms of the religious universe, as represented by the prophets and the Imams. In others words, the parallel representation of the divine light in both realms, which by themselves are two of the ninety-nine names of Allah (*al-Zāhir* and *al-Bātin*), is a sign of the eternity of the divine light, being constantly enhanced by the transformation from one body to another. Thus, Mubārak’s argument implies that submission to God is meant to be a submission to the divinity of the divine name, that is,

*Mawlā* or *Mawlānā*, which, in the Ismā‘ilī context, is applied to the Imams from the family of the Prophet Muhammad through his cousin and son-in-law, ‘Alī.

Submission is also a key element in Noah’s testimony in which, contrary to Adam’s testimony, the main character acts as the main speaker of the subchapter. The significance of the issue of submission in his testimony is probably justified by the fact that, in the general Islamic context, Noah and his ship symbolise human obedience to the divine will. The ultimate consequence of this obedience is the salvation of the soul. Noah, who is usually referred to as ‘the apostle of God’ (*Nabī-u Allāh*), accepts the divinity of the kingdom of ‘Alī and, like Adam, testifies to its primordial essence, while, in addition, he affirms the uniqueness of ‘Alī’s omnipotence (*kardgār*) and His mercifulness:

کردگار تو واحد است و قدیم مجتبیء تو راحم است و رحیم

Your omnipotence is unique and primordial,  
Your choice is mercy and compassion.

In the testimony of Abraham, ‘the friend of God’ (*Khalīl-u Allāh*), Mubārak, for the first time in the poem explicitly mentions the importance of what is understood in the Ismā‘ilī context as spiritual hermeneutics (*ta’wīl*), one of the prophetic qualifications of Abraham. As mentioned earlier, each of the six prophets was qualified in a particular aspect of the divine names; accordingly, Abraham was aware of the inner meanings of the divine names and their interpretations. Abraham’s testimony, therefore, is doctrinally significant because of the idea of spirituality, which is associated with his name in the Qur’ān and in the Muslim tradition.<sup>13</sup> This is the basic point upon which Mubārak tries to build his argument concerning the implied names of God in the realm of spirituality. What, according to Mubārak, Abraham has witnessed—from ‘the veil of concealment’—was the existence of the kingdom (*wilāyat*) of the king (*shāh*) of the spiritual world, on whom human souls depend, and who himself is the necessary being (*wājib al-mawjūd*) because of the soul’s dependence. Abraham, thus, witnessed ‘Alī’s being as the mysteries of

the heart (*asrār-i dil*) and its secrets (*rāz*), which can be disclosed only through the science of the heart (*'ilm al-qulūb*) and by the processors of the heart (*sāhib-dilān*). Hence, the application of these previously discussed Sufi terms slowly harmonised with Ismā'īlī ideas, and this fusion constantly dominated the process of discourse in the poem. In the following verses, Abraham confirms his service to the divine kingdom of 'the wise and pure' lord and the secrets of the human heart:

ز کمین بندگانت ابراهیم      ای تو پروردگار پاک علیم  
می پذیری خداتو عجز و نیاز      ای تو اسرار دل تو سر و تو راز

Abraham is among your few devotees,  
O you are the Pure and Wise patron!  
You accept, O Lord, our indigence and begging,  
O you are the secret of the heart and its mystery!

Apart from the clearly intended allegory, however, one must acknowledge the historical—as viewed from the Abrahamic religious perspective—implication of Abraham's testimony in the poem and his role as the father of all monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) as it is understood in the context of Islam. It is claimed that the chief impact of Abraham's death was the division of his religion between the lineages of his sons Isaac (Ishāq) and Ishmael (Ismā'īl), who became the forefathers of the later Jews, Christians and Muslims respectively. Likewise, Isaac and Ishmael are regarded as the representatives of God's revelation in the realms of *zāhir* and *bātin* as well as the breaking points in the religion of Abraham. Although Mubārak admits that the unbelievers, the Zoroastrians, the associators (*mushrikūn*)<sup>14</sup> and the Christians (*tarsā*), cannot accept the *wilāyat* of 'Alī, he insists that they are all under the umbrella (or protections) of this kingdom and that they are all the ancestors (*aslaf-u sālifīn*) of the Muslims. Likewise, it should be noted that, throughout the poem, Mubārak seeks to preserve his positive reputation for being tolerant towards other religions, as was discussed in chapter 1. He is keen to leave room for inter-religious discussions, and accepts the diverse ways of approaching and understanding God, who, he believes,

is one and has sent many messages but with a unique purpose: to guide human beings to His light through His various prophets who constantly seek His unity. A quotation from the poem will suffice to illustrate this last point:

هر پیامبر که او هدایت کرد طلب نور از ولایت کرد

Each prophet whom he had guided,  
Sought the light revealed in the *Wilāyat*.

As shown by these analyses, many illusions in the poem about *wilāyat* are derived from and addressed to the general Muslim traditional belief in the pre-Islamic historical development of a monotheistic religion that later took on a more precise form (i.e., Islam) under Muhammad. Yet the origin of religion (*asl-i dīn*), according to Mubārak, was Moses, the first prophet, who acquired the knowledge of the divine kingdom of 'Alī through the divine revelation (*wahy-i ilāhī*) in the form of a divine book (Torah).<sup>15</sup> The fourth testimony in the poem, therefore, discusses Moses' admiration of 'Alī's divinity within the frame of the traditional story about Moses' receipt of the divine revelation on the mountain of Tūr. Its argument, however, is confined to the Ismā'īlī traditional legend, in which Moses prayed to God: his *munājāt*, consequently, turned into a dialogue (*munāzira*) with the 'occult voice' (*āvāz-i ghaybī*) of 'Alī. In the poem, Moses is the speaker as well as the main addresser of the discourse. There are three main points in Moses' testimony that Mubārak deploys to formulate his whole statement concerning the essence of Muhammad's *Mīrāj* (ascent). The impact of the *Mīrāj* on Muhammad's further understanding of the divine essence—as argued in the poem—will be discussed in the next two subchapters. But for now it suffices to discuss the three main points in Moses' testimony in order to trace Mubārak's argument on the *Mīrāj*: (1) each concealed voice heard by the prophets was that of 'Alī; (2) everything is reckoned in a manifested Imam; and (3) 'Alī is the chosen (*mujtabā*) name by and for God to be recognised by all, the privileged as well as the common people (*khāss-u 'āmm*). What is paradoxical about the first point is that it slightly softens Gabriel's role

as mediator between God and the prophets during the transmission of the divine revelation, as is believed in the general Islamic context, and implies a monistic idea to ‘Alī’s essence by combining in him both the roles of the creator (*khāliq*) and the direct speaker of the divine revelation. Mubārak, thus, suggests that for Moses—being the first receiver of the divine book—there was no mediator, but the direct imperative call (*nidā’*) of ‘Alī, whose face Moses was not allowed to see:

وھی از غیب چونکہ پیدا بود	لن ترانی <sup>۱۶</sup> ندای مولا بود
آن ندای علیست بی شک و عیب	هر ندایی که میشنید از غیب

“You will not see me” was the Lord’s call,  
 Who revealed the divine revelation from the occult.  
 Whatever voice he heard from the occult,  
 Was, undoubtedly, the voice of ‘Alī.

It would be wrong to assume, however, that Mubārak totally ignores Gabriel’s role in transmitting (*tanzil*) God’s revelation. Rather, he sophisticatedly employs the religious status of this mystical character to convey his message to the hearts and minds of the faithful readers. This argument is clearly expressed in Muhammad’s testimony, to which we will return later. What he attempts to argue, then, is that Gabriel, like the aforementioned mystical prophet Khiḍr, is one of the vocal but unseen attributes (*sifāt*) of ‘Alī, through whom he speaks to the prophets. In other words, Mubārak sticks to one of the Qur’ānic verses most quoted and accordingly reinterpreted by the Shī‘is, especially by the Ismā‘īlis, on the basis of which they usually justify their core doctrinal principle concerning the divine nature of the Imams: “We reckoned all things in a manifested Imam” (36: 12). Mubārak, therefore, argues that Moses as ‘the possessor of the divine book’ (*Kalām-u Allāh*)—his most honoured nickname in the Islamic context—was the first to realise and accept the unity of the divine through ‘Alī’s occult voice (*āvāz-i ghaybī*) and ‘the manifest’ (*āshkār*) divine book (Torah). Here Mubārak makes an interesting theological point of a *qiyāmatī*<sup>17</sup> nature, claiming that ‘the occult voice’ will remain hidden and the books (i.e., all monotheistic revelations) will

serve as instructions (*dastūr*) for the believers until the cessation of the period of the *nubuwat* and the commencement of the eternal period of the Imamate, during which ‘every thing’ (*kull-u shay’in*) will be reckoned in a manifest Imam (*Imām-i mubīn*).

In the fifth testimony presented on behalf of Jesus Christ, Mubārak explicitly elaborates on the esoteric (*bātin*) aspect of the issue, especially the creative role of ‘Alī as the holy spirit (*ruh al-qudus*), whose ‘blessed breath’ (*dam*)<sup>18</sup> caused ‘the spirit of God’ (*Rūh-u Allāh*), the most popular title of Jesus in the Islamic context, to manifest himself in the form of a human being in the physical world by being born of Mary:

به دم مرتضی در این عالم انت باطن و انت ظاهر گفت <sup>19</sup>	شد چو عیسی تولد از مریم انت الاَوَّل و انت الاَخْر
--	---

When Jesus was born of Mary,  
 With the breath of Murtadā in this world,  
 He said: “You are the beginning and the end,  
 You are the *bātin* and the *zāhir*”.

Thus, as seen at the outset of the fifth testimony, the core contribution of Jesus Christ to Mubārak’s argument on the sanctity of ‘Alī’s kingdom (*wilāyat*) is to strengthen its esoteric agenda by providing a historical justification. In other words, the mysterious personality of Jesus Christ, who is even described in Christian mysticism as ‘fully god and fully man’, logically suits Mubārak’s point in highlighting ‘Alī’s role in the Pamiri Ismā‘ilī tradition as the divine supreme authority (in the realm of *bātin*) as well as a human being, the first Shī‘ī Imam from the family of the Prophet Muhammad (in the realm of *zāhir*). Likewise, according to the Ismā‘ilī doctrine of the Alamūt period, Jesus Christ is regarded as the possessor of esoteric exegesis (*ta’wīl*).<sup>20</sup>

Before considering the testimony of Jesus Christ, a word of caution should be issued concerning the *Chihil Dunyā*’s perception of this figure, which, in some respects, differs from that of the general Islamic view of him as one of the eminent prophets of God.<sup>21</sup> It is true that Mubārak, implicitly referring to the Qur’ān (3:39),<sup>22</sup> admits that the status of Jesus

in the physical world is similar to that of Adam; in the following verse speaking on behalf of Jesus, he says:

صد هزاران چو من ز خاک دمید هر کجا خواست نقش پات<sup>23</sup> کشید

Hundred and thousands like me grow forth from the hearth,  
Wherever you wished to lay your footprint.

Nevertheless, the core of his argument, in even sharper contrast with the Christian doctrine of Jesus as the Son of God, inclines towards the recognition of Jesus Christ beyond his status as a prophet. He is regarded as the spirit and the physical manifestation of God in the hearth until his return to the origin, that is, God.<sup>24</sup> Yet some allusions in the poem to the divinity of Jesus Christ are mainly derived from the traditional Ismā‘īlī monist belief of *hama īst* (all is he) according to which, in the realm of *bāṭin*, all of the prophets and Imams are the same, that is ‘Alī of their times, but in the realm of *zāhir* or the physical world, they act in accordance with their human names and times (*nām-u zamān*). Furthermore, it is claimed by several Ismā‘īlī *qiyāmatī* writers, especially in the *Kalām-i Pīr*, that there is no difference between God, the prophet and Imam and that, in reality, there is only one divine substance that appears to be three in the eyes of the ignorant:

له و محمد و علی یک تن بودند<sup>25</sup> در دیده احوالان سه تن بنمودند

Allah, Muhammad and ‘Alī are one and the same substance,  
Though to those whose vision is imperfect they appear as three.

For Mubārak, who also bases his argument on the traditional accounts, ‘Alī—either explicitly (*jalī*) or implicitly (*khafī*)—is the sign (*ramz*) of the manifestation of that divine unity in the form of divine light (*nūr*). Accordingly, this transcendent light has been shining in the world of religion since the time of the prophethood to the time of the Imamate:

بود شاه دین ظهور وحدت از آن  
به امامت ز عارض پر نور

از صافی تا به این زمان میدان  
زاو به هر عصر کرد نور ظهور

Know that, since Adam until this time,  
 The king of religion has been the manifestation of unity.  
 Each time there is the light of him to manifest,  
 From the illuminating face to the Imamate.

Here, the king of religion (*Shāh-i dīn*), ‘Alī, is described as the sign of divine unity that has been manifesting itself in the prophets and the Imams (i.e., the Ismā‘ilī Imams) since the time of the prophet Adam. Constant light has been transmitting from ‘Alī to each prophet who came after Adam, until it illuminated the face of the Imamate. Hence, Mubārak believes that ‘Alī, as the transcendent divine light, is the essence of the religious world (*‘ālam-i dīn*), the core substance (*jawhar*) of its motion (*gardish*) and the principle of its existence (*mawjudiyyat*). In other words, ‘Alī (*Imām-i Zamān*) is the manifestation of both the divine (*lāhut*) and human (*nāsūt*) natures of God. All the prophets and the Imams, therefore, possessing that divine light, are the representatives of God in the physical world through whom God makes himself known to humans, and through whom God expects to be worshipped.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, Jesus, as a manifestation of divine unity, was the Man of God of his time who possessed the light of ‘Alī and his extraordinary power (*qudrat*). Derived from a famous biblical story, where Jesus Christ brings a deceased person to life, the following argument concerning Jesus’ source of divine supremacy and the secrets behind his miracles is put forward as the central point of the sixth testimony:

مرده چون ورنه زنده گرداند اب بخش حیاتم او ساقیست	نخواه من دم علی ماند او بر نفس از من باقیست
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My pride is the breath of ‘Alī,  
 Otherwise a dead would not be brought to life,  
 His breath is kept in my soul.  
 I give the water of life and he is the cupbearer!

In the fifth testimony, Mubārak, for the first time in the treatise, creates a polemic argument against those who deny the divinity (*ilāhiyyat*) of ‘Alī and regard him as a human being. Through Jesus’ words, he tries to explain how, in the realm of the physical world, the divine substance had

a name and was regarded as the son of Abī Ṭālib, but that, in fact, he is the creator (*āfarīnanda-gār*) of the world and the key-possessor of the world's affairs (*kalīd-i qufl-i kirdgār*). One may assume that Mubārak's presentation of this polemic argument in the testimony of Jesus is closely linked to Jesus Christ himself, who, according to the Christian doctrine, was the Son of God, but, for the followers of the Old Testament, appeared as Jesus of Nazareth and the son of Mary. Furthermore, Mubārak argues that, if the recognition of 'Alī is limited only to the realm of his physical attributes such as 'the commander of faithful' (*amīr al-mū'minīn*) in the religious sense and 'the lion of God' (*shīr-i khudā*) in the military sense, then the true divine knowledge (*ta'yīd*) is not obtained and so, consequently, it is a symptom of infidelity (*kufr*):

کافر اندر حقیقت او ماند اوست پروردگار پاک حلیم	گر علی را کسی بشر داند به سبب ز آنکه ذات اوست قدیم
---	---

If anybody regards 'Alī as a human being,  
He would truly remain an infidel.  
Because his essence is primordial,  
He is the pure and intelligent patron.

The conclusion of the fifth testimony is the importance of the recognition (*shinākht*) of God through the science ('ilm) of *ta'yīd*, whose possession, according to Mubārak, identifies one's fidelity and opens one's eyes to actually see the vision of God. For Mubārak, the master of this science and the sign of the unity of the divine unique is 'Alī and the pupils of the *ta'yīd* are, of course, the lovers ('āshiqān) and the gnostics ('ārifān), who, through love ('ishq) and blessed knowledge (*ma'rifat*), perceive the true vision of the beloved.

#### **4.5. THE DENOUEMENT OF THE PROPHET'S FIRST *MIRĀJ***

The vision of God (*dīdār*) is ultimately the main goal of Mubārak's spiritual quest for salvation and the highest stage of his mystical imagination, explored in the sixth testimony where the Prophet Muhammad is

represented as the last witness to testify on the divinity of ‘Alī. Unlike the testimonies of the preceding prophets, where the evidence is based on what the prophets heard and learned from the ‘occult voice’ (*āvāz-i ghaybī*), Muhammad’s testimony is firmly supported by the visual substantiations of his own spiritual experience obtained during his Night Journey (*Isrā’*) and Ascension (*Mi‘rāj*). The myth about the Prophet’s outward journey, which is believed to have happened on either the twenty-seventh night of *Rajab* or the seventeenth night of *Rabi‘ al-Awwal* in the year before the *Hijra*, for centuries has been a popular genre in Islamic mystical literature, especially in Persian poetry.<sup>27</sup> Mubārak also employs this theme to justify his argument concerning the manifestation of the divine sign to the Prophet Muhammad, although from a different perspective. Firstly, his recounting of the *Mi‘rāj* is rather a consequence of the Prophet’s spiritual experience in heaven than an actual case of the *Mi‘rāj* narrated in the traditional Muslim stories. Secondly, he narrates a new story about another ascent of the Prophet, which we may refer to as the second *Mi‘rāj*, but, this time, it was to the mysterious Forty Worlds (*Chihil Dunyā*), as the title suggests. Here, not only has the Prophet’s itinerary changed (from *Masjid al-Harām* to *Masjid al-Aqsā*),<sup>28</sup> but also the vehicle of his ascent has changed from *al-Burāq* (a heavenly mount) to the angel Gabriel himself.<sup>29</sup> The issue of the Prophet’s journey to the Forty Worlds will be discussed further in the next subchapter. For now, let it suffice to examine the denouement of the Prophet’s first *Mi‘rāj* and its doctrinal significance for the *Panj-Tanī* faith, as viewed in the sixth testimony.

The commencement of the sixth testimony has the didactic purpose of conveying a message of doctrinal importance to the faithful readers where, in the realm of physical attributes, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib is presented as the first sign of the Imamate’s unveiling during the prophethood of Muhammad. The fact that the issue of the Imamate after the death of the Prophet became a key point in the Shī‘ī, especially the Ismā‘ilī, doctrine of religious leadership is what Mubārak uses as the substructure for his argument to further elaborate on the inner side of the Imamate. For he believes the Imamate is deeply rooted in the divine essence of ‘Alī,

as was discovered and recognised by the Prophet Muhammad after his return from the *Mīrāj*. The belief that ‘Alī unveiled himself and revealed the mysteries of the divine secrets in the time of and to Muhammad is a well-known concept of the Ismā‘īlī esoteric agenda, especially in the *qiyāmatī* literature.<sup>30</sup> What Mubārak does here, however, is to systematise the idea into a framework of the traditional indigenous narrative by providing it with a sustainable doctrinal background.

The testimony is articulated in the form of a story narration, in which each episode develops because of its preceding involvement with the three main characters, the Prophet, ‘Alī, Gabriel and the author. The unity of the testimony’s episodic structure may well be segregated into three stages in the Prophet’s post-Ascent spiritual state: (1) the Prophet’s return to reality and perplexity about his unreal experience; (2) the angel Gabriel and the awakening of the Prophet’s inner consciousness; and (3) the deprivation of his illusion and submission to the divinity of ‘Alī. As mentioned earlier, the themes of *Isrā’* and *Mīrāj*, as traditionally narrated and discussed in the Islamic context, are not the concerns of the sixth testimony, but the author’s purpose in raising them initially is merely to support the key argument of his entire treatise; that is, to prove the divine essence of ‘Alī in every possible way. For this reason, the testimony begins by stressing the significance of the Imamate’s unveiling at the commencement of Muhammad’s prophethood to the name of ‘Alī, as it is perceived in the realm of its religious universe (*‘ālam-i dīn*) and its physical reality. This reality alone, however, as the author argues, was insufficient to convince the Prophet about the essence of ‘Alī and the importance of the institution of the Imamate. He, thus, needed to be shown the signs of divine truth in the *Isrā’* and *Mīrāj* through his personal spiritual experience. This is what Mubārak focuses on in the testimony; he, then, exclusively concentrates on Muhammad’s post-Ascent state, the first of which is the state of perplexity (*hayrat*) that occurred immediately upon his return to the earth. His perplexity tended to be caused by the outcome of his initial expectation of the *Mīrāj*, which was to be shown the signs of the divinity, as promised in the Qur’ān.<sup>31</sup> Instead, in heaven, he saw a familiar face: the face of his own cousin and son-in-law with whom he interacted

almost every day and who first received and cheered him after the ascent. Furthermore, the Prophet is surprisingly impressed when he hears the whole story of his *Isrā'* and *Mīrāj* from ‘Alī. Here, Mubārak quotes a verse from Hāfiẓ, in which he questions how it is possible that the mystery of the divine secret, known only by a spiritually progressed (*sālik*) gnostic (*‘arif*), could be known to a wine seller (*bāda-furush*).<sup>32</sup> Wine, in general Sufi thought, usually symbolises divine love and ecstasy, and the wine seller or cupbearer (*sāqī*) the guide. Although one cannot dismiss the possibility of different interpretations of this question in particular and the whole *ghazal* of Hāfiẓ in general, the reason for Mubārak’s citation of it appears hidden by the very nature of his mystical discourse about ‘Alī’s divinity. As he argues, not only the ignorant (*jāhil*) refused to accept the divinity of ‘Alī, but even the Prophet Muhammad himself was unaware of it before his second *Mīrāj*. It, therefore, stands to reason that Mubārak, attempting to conceptualise his argument by an authority like Hāfiẓ, metaphorically uses the verse in which Muhammad, in his view, represents a spiritually progressed *sālik* and ‘Alī, on the other hand, a wine seller, until the Prophet decides to discover the ultimate truth behind ‘Alī’s essence. Hence, the first question the Prophet himself asks regarding God is whose face he saw when entering the divine presence and, if it was that of God, then why is it the same as the face of ‘Alī?<sup>33</sup>

تا که من دیدمش به عرش نکو	گفت یا رب کدام ذات است او
ز من در تپیدن آمده دل	باز میبینمش براین منزل

He said: “O Lord, who is that person,  
The one I saw in the glorious heaven?  
I am seeing him again in this location,  
My heart starts to palpitate”.

Through questioning the essence of the one whom he saw in either location, the next stage in the Prophet’s personal spiritual experience begins. This is the stage of awareness in which his will to determine the true mystery behind the divine secret is activated. The main episodes occur consequentially in the world of Muhammad’s imagination,

where the angel Gabriel symbolises and gradually awakens his inner consciousness. Here, while talking to ‘Alī soon after the *Mi‘rāj*, the Prophet is provided with the answers he could not obtain from the world of physical reality. In a dialogue between Muhammad and Gabriel, two important questions arise: How could ‘Alī be a man and God at the same time? And how does he differ from the angel Gabriel? In order to answer the first question, Mubārak uses the argument that ‘Alī’ is fully a man in the realm of *zāhir* (or in *Shari‘at*) and fully God in the realm of *bātin* (or *haqīqat*) while elaborating a dialogue between the Prophet and the angel-mediator. Gabriel, therefore, provides Muhammad with an explanation in order to overcome his confusion about the essence of ‘Alī.

One of the given explanations is that God is not an unimaginable distant mystery, but very close to human piety, who possesses a human form in the realm of the material world in order to be accessible to and directly addressable by human beings. Thus, a reference is made to the Qur‘ān and the *hadīth*<sup>34</sup>, where the two are remarkably integrated as the two evidential parts of a verse:

در کلام یوحیی چون	هست قل ائمہ بشر مثلكم
خالق مطلق و خداوند است	کار به شخص علیم مانند است
صورت واحد خدا این است	خلق آدم علی این است

“Say thou, I am a man like you”,  
 Is written in the book of revelation.  
 He resembles the Wise Person;  
 He is the Absolute Creator and the Lord.  
 This is what “man is created,  
 In the unique image of God” means.

Thus, this verse suggests that the recognition of God in human form, as ‘Alī, is justified by the Qur‘ān and *hadīth*, and is a sign of the divine manifestation in the physical world. In one respect, ‘Alī’s divinity was a mystery of God that was first explicitly unveiled and demonstrated to the Prophet Muhammad in both heaven (during the *Mi‘rāj*) and then

on earth (in Mecca). On the other hand, however, it is argued that the manifestation of God in the person of ‘Alī was the only possible way in which the Prophet Muhammad could perceive the beauty of the divine form; otherwise, the image of God is beyond description. Hence, when the angel Gabriel denies the Prophet’s illusion about the divine image, he seeks to convince Muhammad that the image that he saw in heaven and on earth was divine beauty manifested in human form:

آن که زاو دیده بر جمال علیست نبدي تحقیق ذو الجلال علیست

The one, whose beauty the eye perceived, was ‘Alī.  
You clearly saw that ‘Alī is full of majesty and glory.

The question now arises: why did the Prophet need to be shown the mystery of the divine secret in the form of his own cousin and son-in-law, ‘Alī? To answer this question, one should bear in mind one of Mubārak’s clear doctrinal arguments in this treatise, that, justifying the significance of the Imamate, a divinely established institution of the human guide, which historically commenced with the name of ‘Alī. Mubārak, therefore, provides Gabriel with another alibi to present to the Prophet Muhammad in order to convince him about the superiority of ‘Alī. The Prophet is made aware of the fact that, following his death, the chain of religious guidance will continue through the genetic line (*nasl-i dhurriyat*) of ‘Alī. The angel also counsels the Prophet that his role as a Warner (*mundhir*)<sup>35</sup> of God’s instructions (*dasturāt*) will cease and that divine guidance will directly flow from the family (*kunyat*) of ‘Alī until the day of the resurrection (*rūz-i qiyāmat*). Furthermore, it is recommended that Muhammad should pass this message on to his community, as this was the key condition to the completion of his prophetic mission.<sup>36</sup> This statement, thus, is intended to provide a very obvious, but strong justification of the general Shī‘ī doctrinal argument concerning the inevitability of the end of the prophethood as an intermediate God-human link and the continuation of divine guidance through the Imamate, which will then bridge the gap between divine-human relationships.

Now, while the Prophet is altered in terms of the ending of the *nubuwwat* as well as his position as the seal of the prophets (*khātam al-anbiyā'*),<sup>37</sup> Gabriel proceeds to inform Muhammad that his own duty, as the mediator between God and the Prophet, in bringing down (*nuzūl*) the divine revelation (*wahy*), will also cease with the explicit emergence of 'Alī's Imamate. To solve this complicated issue, Mubārak deploys the aforementioned monistic doctrine of 'All is Him' (*hamast*) to argue for Gabriel's retirement. Before exploring this argument, which explains the uniqueness of Gabriel and 'Alī's essence, however, it is worth clarifying two points which Mubārak makes in order to differentiate between 'Alī and Gabriel as well as highlight their similarity. Firstly, in the sense of creation, it is suggested that Gabriel is the ideal architect (*ṣun'*) on whose symbolically chosen palm of clay (*musht-i khāk*) the human body was initially created, and 'Alī signifies the true power of creation. Secondly, it appears that Gabriel, as a bodiless angel of divine power, evoking the sense of the Prophet's imagination, stands for the power of the soul (*qudrat-i jān*) and its will (*irāda*) to receive, understand and transmit the divine message indirectly during the cycle of occultation (*dawr al-satr*) represented by the six prophets with authority. For, in this cycle, the *nubuwwat* is originally intended to be a temporarily testing period in the world of religion ('ālam-i dīn). Yet 'Alī, as the physical manifestation of God on earth, represents the harmony between the power of the body (*qudrat-i tan*) and the power of the soul (*qudrat-i jān*), which directly endows the community of Muslims (*ummah*) with the divine presence as well as guidance during the external period of the Imamate. It is, therefore, evident in this light that Gabriel in the poem is the means of God-Prophet communication but in a restricted form (vocal) and a temporal sense (during the *nubuwwat* only), while 'Alī, on the other hand, as the symbol of the Imamate, is the direct, unlimited and eternal God-human link which does not require a mediator to establish divine-human relationships. Gabriel for Mubārak is 'Alī but the verbal representation of divine speech. And vice versa 'Alī is Gabriel but the physical manifestation of divine guidance; as the

aim of the divine revelation is to guide human beings on the straight path (*Širāt al-mustaqqīm*). The amalgamation of Gabriel and ‘Alī’s functions is a logical way of harmonising the divine unity. Thus, one can easily see that Mubārak emphasises the importance of the transformation of divine revelation. He highlights the Ismā‘ilī doctrinal fact that, with the end of the period of the *nubuwwat*, there will be no further need for Gabriel to act as the agent of divine revelation and guidance and that everything will be reckoned in the Imam of the Time (*Imām-i Zamān*). Along the following lines, in the poem, the angel attempts to convince the Prophet that, if he wants to believe, then there is no reason to make a distinction between himself and ‘Alī:

غلم گر نی هم او باشم اوست نزد تو حاضر و موجود	او به من بود و من بر او باشم آن که هست و همیشه خواهد بود
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He was for me and I will be for him,  
 If you do not take me wrongly, then I am him.  
 The one who is and will always remain,  
 Is him, currently present in front of you.

When the inner consciousness of the Prophet is awakened, he has returned from the angelic realm to the realm of reality to see ‘Alī and confess his unawareness. Here one can clearly observe Mubārak’s strict emphasis on the superiority of ‘Alī to all other beings, even to the Prophet as depicted in the local Ismā‘ilī context; an argument that contradicts almost every ascension story, in which the superiority of the Prophet Muhammad is the first major theme.<sup>38</sup> The last stage in Muhammad’s post-ascension spiritual state, therefore, is the stage of repentance (*tawba*); he admits his ignorance about and submissions to the divinity of ‘Alī in the physical realm. The denouement of the last episode is altruistically remarkable in Muhammad’s testimony. In one respect, it is an episode of a panegyric nature, in which the importance of Muhammad’s position as the Prophet of Allah as well as ‘Alī’s father-in-law is intentionally reduced during his conversation with ‘Alī’. Employing the first word (*lā*) and the last phrases (*illā Allāh*) of the first part of the *shahādat* ('there is no God, but

Allah'), the author refers the Prophet as *lā*—a symbol of the negation of any other God, but 'Alī. On the other hand, he is described as nothing in comparison with God:

شد خر امان به نزد حضرت شاه رفت چو لا به نزد الا الله

He gracefully strode towards His Highness, the King,  
Like *lā* he headed for but *Allāh*.

The Prophet declares 'Alī as the sun of the world of the soul (*āftāb-i 'ālm-i jān*), the creator of the creatures (*khāliq al-khalāq*) and the blessing giving maintainer (*rāziq al-razzāq*). In other respects, nevertheless, this argument implies the moral conviction that true knowledge is capable of reducing selfish human attributes like egoism and arrogance regardless of one's social position.

The most remarkable point in Muhammad's confession, nevertheless, is the Prophet's desire to know and discover the secrets of divine mystery, its surprises (*'ajā'ib*) and peculiarities (*gharā'ib*). He asks 'Alī to unveil both to and through him to the community of the Muslims the secrets of God and the means of His true guidance. This stage in the Prophet's spiritual state can be regarded as a short break between the first, traditionally perceived *Isrā'* and *Mi'rāj*, and second, described by Mubārak as the Prophet's journey to and discovery of the *Chihil-Dunyā*, ascents of Muhammad.

#### 4.6. THE SECOND *Mi'rāj* OF THE PROPHET

The Prophet's journey to the *Chihil-Dunyā* and discovery of its forty worlds, each of which represents a secret (*sirr*) of the divine mystery, is what Mubārak passionately calls the true moment (*lahzā*) of divine inspiration (*ilhām*), leading one to imagine oneself in the divine presence. It is a moment in which the Prophet finally finds God in human form, a very familiar (*āshnā*) form to identify, but startlingly hard to understand. In this connection, when Mubārak speaks of the 'true moment', he probably refers to one of the famous prophetic *aḥādīth*,<sup>39</sup> mostly quoted by the

Sufis where the idea of time (*waqt*) is used to accommodate the duration of the divine presence within oneself and one's spiritual power to be able to live in and gain inspiration from that moment. Such a moment for the Prophet, Mubārak maintains, occurred during his journey to the *Chihil-Dunyā* and his meeting with its inhabitants, the *Chihil Tanān* (forty men). Before discussing this, it is essential to present a brief etymological account of the number forty, its applications and religious significance in the local Pamiri context, and, consequently, to determine the reasons behind Mubārak's use of it.

### The Number Forty

Numbers have long been held as sacred among almost all civilisations throughout the world; they stand for various elements in the nature and culture of human existence and constitute a system of values for particular societies. In the context of mysticism, each number has its own attributes and applied meaning that is almost universal in the Judaic, Christian and Islamic religious traditions. The number forty, which sometimes signifies 'preparation and completion',<sup>40</sup> is a very special omnipresent number in the sacred scriptures as well as popular cultures of the Abrahamic religions. For instance, it is believed that Moses spent forty days in the wilderness before God appeared to him in a cave on Mount Horeb. Forty was the number of days that Jesus was tempted in the desert by Satan, and it was the number of hours that his body remained in the tomb before his resurrection. Likewise, it is held that Buddha sat under the *bodhi* tree for forty days to attain enlightenment. Lastly, in the cycle of the prophets, forty was the number of days during which Muhammad undertook *khilvat* (retreat or *chilla* in Persian) to the mountain of Hira to receive divine revelation at the age of forty. *Chilla*, as a prophetic tradition, then, became a mandatory example for Islamic mystics to undergo a retreat of forty days, including meditation and prayers, in order to obtain spiritual fulfilment.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the number forty is closely associated with the ideas of the preparation, purification, maturity and completion of the human soul and its growth to the stage of the true understanding of the divine essence.

In relation to the Pamiri Ismā‘īlī tradition, there are several cases in which the general Islamic symbolism of the number forty is applied in various contexts. Firstly, forty is distinguished as an intellectually sound stage (*sinn-i kamāl-i khirad*) in human life in which the human brain is believed to function to its full capacity in making rational decisions. In addition to the example of Muhammad’s age of prophecy, the best example in the local context is that of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the *pīr* of Badakhshan, who at the age of forty converted to Ismā‘īlism or, as traditionally held, was guided in his dream to choose ‘the right faith’, that is the faith of ‘the rightly guided summons’ (*al-da‘wat al-hādiyya*). Likewise, Mubārak himself, as discussed in chapter 2, determined and chose the path of mysticism at the age of forty. Secondly, forty as the duration of the aforementioned spiritual retreat (*chilla-nishīnī*) is seriously taken to be the period of asceticism in which one loses one’s selfish soul (*nafs*) and obtains the vision (*dīdār*) of God. It should be noted that the performance of the *chilla-nishīnī* demands that one obeys certain technical rules and regulations, which strongly depend on one’s physical and spiritual capacity to cope with them. For instance, one has to have sufficient knowledge (*ma‘rifat*) of religious science and devotional love (*muḥabbat*) for the creator and deny the physical aspect of his/her life in terms of self-indulgence. Moreover, it is recommended to perform the *chilla* during the forty cold days of the winter, which is also called the *chilla*, and to eat very little. This is probably to ascertain whether the seeker of God is truly ready to sacrifice his/her physical health for the sake of the creator or is just pretending. In order to test the seeker’s moral and psychical strength, the *chilla* must be taken in a mountain cave far from human inhabitance, so that nothing can scare (e.g., jinn) or stand between (human interruptions) the seeker and the Sought. Hence, it is believed that, if the rules are strictly followed, the seeker’s meditation and prayers will be accepted on the fortieth day and God’s vision will be achieved.

Thirdly, the number forty is connected to the Persian calendar which has its particularities in the Pamiri context. Above all, it specifies the length of days in the four seasons of the year characterised by each season’s normal weather conditions (i.e., temperature, humidity and

dehydration) and agricultural possibilities. For instance, *chilla-yi zimistān* (the forty days of winter), is regarded the coldest period of the year, in which the cold may cause human death. The winter *chilla* is divided into the *chilla-yi kalān* (the great *chilla*, December 21–January 30), and the *chilla-yi khurd* (the little *chilla*), which is the continuation of the *chilla-yi kalān* and twenty days shorter than the former, as its name suggests. On the other hand, *chilla-yi tābistān* (the forty days of summer, June 21–July 26) is the hottest period in Pamir.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the traditional Pamiri calendar employs the term *chil* (a short form of *chihil*) in relation to the spring, by stressing forty days (*chill-i bahār*) as the most convincing period in which to commence the agricultural works, which starts with the Persian New Year, *Navrūz*.

Fourthly, the number forty is associated with the name of several shrines and even entire villages in the region, especially in the Wakhān valley, where it stands for a special group of hidden saints consisting of forty men (*Chihil-Tanān*), whose ‘footsteps’ (*qadamgāh*) are symbolically enshrined in the villages of Dirch, Chil-Tāq and Vnukut (here the shrine is called *chil-murīd*, i.e., ‘forty disciples’). Although all the aforementioned cases of the employment of the number forty are essential in determining Mubārak’s inspiration in creating a supersensory chain of ‘the forty worlds’, the last case tends to have a huge influence on his creative imagination. For Mubārak, the *Chihil-Tanān* are, after all, the inhabitants of ‘the forty worlds’, the worlds of divine secrets, to which the Prophet Muhammad is taken on a magical tour. Who, then, are the *Chihil-Tanān*, and where are ‘the forty worlds’ located? Before answering this question, in the case of Mubārak, it is necessary to examine the issue in the broad context of Islamic mysticism in order set in its doctrinal context.

As far as the Persian term *chihil-tan* is concerned, there is no wide doctrinal employment of it in the broad context of Islamic mysticism. Nevertheless, forty as the number of the special category of the hidden Islamic saints, sometimes referred to as ‘hidden men’ (*rijāl al-ghayb*), is categorically mentioned in the Islamic mystic literature. For instance, al-Hakim al-Tirmizī (d.912), who is regarded as one the earliest Muslim

thinkers to employ the term *walī* in relation to the concept of friendship with God, in his *Khātm al-Wilāyah* (The Seal of Sanctity), asserts that there is a special category of saints called *abdāl* (substitutes) among the 4000 ‘hidden saints’ in the court of God.<sup>43</sup> In Persian mystical tradition, al-Tirmizi’s idea was later developed by ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān al-Ḥujwīrī (d.1072) in his famous *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, in which he describes the hidden saints as the superior (*najīb*) or the (divinely) chosen category of saints who live among ordinary people and solve their earthly problems.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the believers merely need to seek help from the *rijāl al-ghayb* by performing a special process of meditation which involves the recitation of certain prayers (*du‘ā*) and silent *dhikr*; well-focused concentration at the entire process is strongly required.<sup>45</sup> The famous medieval Sufi authority and biographer ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d.1492), in his *Nafāḥāt al-uns min Ḥadrat al-Quds*, further elaborates on the issue. While examining the 4000 saints, he distinguishes the forty *abdāl* as one of the most important groups among the sixth special categories of the hidden saints (1 *qutb*, 3 *atqiya*, 4 *awtād*, 7 *abrār*, 40 *abdāl* and 300 *akhyār*). He argues that all forty of the *abdāl* live among humans, but their presence is not physically observed or even noticed.<sup>46</sup> Hence, in the general context of Islamic mysticism, the *Chihil-Tanān* or *Rijāl al-Ghayb*, as a very special group, blessed with the divine power of the hidden (*ghaybī*) saints, is assumed to constitute the court of God and to act as his special agents among ordinary people as the angel-guardians to help and protect God’s faithful.

The myth about the *Chihil-Tanān*, as the angel-guardians, is significantly strong in the popular imagination of the Central Asian Muslims; it constitutes the core principle of popular religious belief in the hidden saints and their miraculous power to be in the right time and place for those in need. It is remarkable that all of the Turkic and Persian ethnic groups of the major Sunni and minor Shī‘ī backgrounds have a similar belief in and perception of the *Chihil-Tanān*. They even use the common Persian term *chil-tan* (a shorter version of *chihil-tan*) to refer to the hidden saints. An introductory study to this area was done by the Russian scholar, Andreyev, who visited different parts of the region in

the earlier twentieth century. Although Andreyev's article is short and restricted in content, it provides an important account, of particular ethnographic value, about this popular belief among the inhabitants of Muslim Central Asia.<sup>47</sup> According to his observations, in some valleys of the region, such as Mastchāh (in modern Tajikistan), the *Chihil-Tanān* are described as the assistants of Khiḍr, the eternal living mystic prophet, who is believed to be everywhere at all times to help those in trouble. For the Tatars, the *Chihil-Tanān*, also known as the *ghayb-yārān* (the hidden friends), are the guides of those lost in the desert. The Kyrgyz, regarding the *Chihil-Tanān* as one person resembling Khiḍr, ironically double the number conveyed by this term (due to the language difference) and call them *qirq shil-tan*; namely, 'forty (*qirq*) forty men' who are the friends of the faithful. In contrast to the positive image of the *Chihil-Tanān* however, there are some places in the region where they have a negative image. For instance, in the Yaksu valley of the Eastern Bukhārā, they are referred to as the *chil-tan-qaraqchī* (the forty thief men), who claimed to steal infants in order to replace their deceased family members. Although, in the general view, the *Chihil-Tanān* are not regarded as 'thieves', this hypothesis is a common belief about how they make up their numbers and maintain it at forty.

One of the interesting stories that Andreev quotes in his article concerns the origin of the *Chihil-Tanān*, which is common to Central Asia. He recorded it in the Chandarān village (in Hindukush) of Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup> I was told a similar myth about the emergence of the *Chihil-Tanān* in the Dirch village of Wakhān, which is associated with a shrine (in the form of a sycamore tree, *chinār*) referred to as *chil-tan-i buzurgvār* (the sacred forty men). The myth relates how the *Chihil-Tanān* were first born as humans, in a king's house, and then mysteriously disappeared to serve the divine court as 'the guardian angels' of mankind.<sup>49</sup> The religious moral of the story is that the king's arrogance, resulting from his ignorance, did not allow him to understand and accept God's grace, that is, the birth of the forty babies, although he was desperately longing for a child. Consequently, his ingratitude led not only to personal punishment, but also communal tragedy, as it was peoples' judgment of

which the king was ashamed. Nevertheless, the ultimate message that the story conveys is that God's grace and mercy are not limited by nor depend on human behaviour. For God is entirely good and from good only good may result (*az dūst har chi rasad nakūst*). God, therefore, not only forgave the king and his people, but also established an eternal divine agency from among his closest friends (*Chihil-Tanān*) on the earth to help and protect his believers. Specifically a religious genre, this story is, in a deeper sense, a myth concerned with the timeless reflection of morality. Its moral philosophy is governed by the opposition between human hope and its true intention, as tested by divine power.

It is, thus, perceived in the popular religious belief of the Central Asian Muslims that the *Chihil-Tanān* constitute a secret society of hidden saints, very close friends of God, who are blessed with supernatural power and divine knowledge to assist those believers who sincerely call on them in the times of confusion and helplessness.

#### **4.7. MUHAMMAD IN THE DIVINE WONDERLAND**

When the popular story about the *Chihil-Tanān* is established, it is necessary to discuss Mubārak's own perception of their role in filling the vacuum of secrecy in divine-human relations. In other words, a line needs to be drawn between the traditionally held assumption about the *Chihil-Tanān* as the 'hidden' saints and Mubārak's determination to unveil their so-called true nature as the inhabitants of the world of divine secrets, towards which the Prophet traveled. Although the material at our disposal is multi-faceted and often contradictory, the common belief in the *Chihil-Tanān* as being very close friends of God can be observed throughout Mubārak's treatise. What then makes his approach different from the traditional ones is the way in which he employs the very idea of the *chihil-tan* in the Pamiri Ismā'īlī context and, accordingly, establishes a doctrinal framework for it. Contrary to traditional accounts, Mubārak at first discloses the secretive nature of the *Chihil-Tanān* and unveils the secret behind their mission by making them approachable to human beings through the example of the Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, he

precisely defines some of the basic religious functions of the *Chihil-Tanān* which explain the reason for their holiness as well as the Prophet's meeting with them. Firstly, it is held that the *chihil-tan* is 'the family of people in the quest for meaning' (*qawm-i dar pay-i ma'nā*). It is in this deeper sense of the *Chihil-Tanān*'s essence that the Prophet enters the world of divine secrets and determines the meaning behind his prophetic mission. Muhammad's quest for meaning, which is probably one of the differentiating factors in and reasons for his second *Mīrāj*, starts by questioning the consequences (i.e., surprise and confusion) of the first Ascension and Night Journey. It is, therefore, a quest for truth about the mystery behind the divine essence (*dhāt*) manifested in a human form (i.e., 'Alī) that prompted the Prophet to accept Gabriel's invitation to the tour of the *Chihil-Dunyā*, the divine wonderland of the *Chihil-Tanān*. Secondly, Mubārak refers to the *Chihil-Tanān* as 'the lovers of the *Wilāyat* or family of 'Alī' (*muhibān-i khāndān*), who truly recognise 'Alī's divinity (*ilāhiyyat*) in the realm of the spiritual world. Thus, for the Prophet to understand the truth of the divine secrets and achieve the ultimate goal of his prophetic mission—to establish an institution of human guidance (the Imamate)—it was essential to travel to the divine wonderland and meet its inhabitants.

Part of the picture is that up to the Qāf, a mystical mountain range in Islamic cosmology, surrounding the terrestrial world,<sup>50</sup> 'Alī 'in person' accompanies the Prophet and then gives him his ring, as a symbol of trust, to discover the four summits of the first world of the divine wonderland, namely *Turfa-Jā'h* (the place of enjoyment), *Darvāza-yi Shahr* (the gate of the city), *Bāzār* (the market) and *Dār al-Salām* (the world of peace).

Before discussing the summits of the Prophet's journey, it is worth explaining Mubārak's emphasis on the concept of trust (*tawakkul*), a confident and unconditional belief in God and His power, which was assumed to grow naturally in the faithful. Here, the idea, as interpreted in a mystic sense, designates the reliability of Muhammad in understanding and accepting God's secrets revealed to him in the divine wonderland by 'Alī, his cousin and son-in-law in the realm of the physical or sensory

world. In return, the Prophet is honored with ‘Alī’s ring, which literally becomes his talisman and entry proof in each and every corner of the forty worlds. When ‘Alī gives the ring to Muhammad, he ensures that the Prophet will have a pleasant journey to the *Chihil Dunyā*, as well as a safe return home, where he was to return it to Fātiḥa. The importance of the ring is described as follows:

کائنات این همه قرین من است  
که به فرمان از نگین من است

The entire universe is in the vicinity of my kingdom,  
It is all under the command of the gem of my ring.

Hence, the main drama occurs in the first of the forty worlds which is located beyond the mountain of Qāf. The Prophet’s point of departure and return, that is, his home in the sensory world, where he was given the ring and where he was supposed to return it, remains, more or less, on the geographic map. But it is the place in the middle of the journey, the suprasensory world, to which our topography cannot be applied in the material sense. It is a kind of spiritual space that Corbin, one of the greatest authorities on Shī‘ī mysticism and theosophy, calls the *mundus imaginalis* (or ‘ālam al-mithāl), an intermediate world of Images which stands between the empirical world and the world of abstract understanding; it is “a precise order of reality corresponding to a precise mode of perception” obtained by our imaginative consciousness or cognitive Imagination.<sup>51</sup> It is this ‘precise order of reality’ that the Prophet aspires to attain on his journey to the Forty Worlds. It is this ‘precise mode of perception’ with which one has to follow Muhammad’s adventure in the divine kingdom of ‘Alī. Throughout his journey, the Prophet is accompanied by ‘Alī, either in person or in ‘other forms’ (e.g., an old man, Gabriel, Khiḍr, etc.), in order to discover the reality of ‘Alī. In other words, it is a journey from ‘Alī with ‘Alī and to ‘Alī. ‘Alī is the one who motivates the Prophet to make a journey to the divine wonderland for the sake of gaining a deeper understanding of the divine truth. At the same time, he is the Prophet’s personal internal guide and the source of his spiritual inspiration.

Thus, in the *Turfa-Jā’h*, the Prophet is shown the natural beauty of the spiritual world (rose gardens with aromatic scents, peaceful rivers of milk, golden mountains, etc.) before he progresses toward the divine. The beauty of spiritual reality, described as if it were perceived in the sensory world, indicates that, in Islamic mysticism, the spiritual or the world hereafter is far better than the physical world. Through the gate, the Prophet enters the city market, a place full of food and commodities, with the active presence of human beings. This is the first and only time in the treatise that the Prophet, during his heavenly voyage, encounters human beings, who later turn out to be the *Chihil-Tanān*. Then follows the Prophet’s hunger for the food displayed on the market shelves; he tries to snatch some but someone takes his hand and asks who the stranger is. It is in this moment of anxiety that the conversation between the Prophet and the *Chihil-Tanān* begins. They accuse the Prophet of being a stranger who tried to steal ‘Alī’s property; on the contrary, the Prophet strives to prove his family relationship to ‘Alī. The dispute finally brings both groups to *Dār al-Salām*, the court of ‘Alī, to see whether the Prophet was telling the truth. But the truth that the Prophet was about to uncover overlaps his main argument with the *Chihil-Tanān*; it is true that he was ‘Alī’s relative and that the food that he was about to snatch was also ‘Alī’s property. But the one on the throne, whom the *Chihil-Tanān* referred to as ‘Alī, was the face of God that he has seen in the *Mīrā*:

چو پیامبر جمال مولی دید      کو به مراجح حق تعالی دید

As the Prophet looked at the beauty of the Guardian Lord,  
It appeared to him the almighty God, whom he saw on the  
Ascent.

The anxiety of the Prophet is combined with his joy at seeing the face of ‘Alī in ‘the world of peace’, from where the light of the *wilāyat* was shining from its king (*shāh*) ‘Alī. After a moment of repentance and confession, which was followed by the *dīdār* with ‘Alī, the Prophet was

advised not to concentrate on the image (*sūrat*) he saw, but to follow the aim of his original mission; which was to continue his quest for meaning (*ma'nā*). This is probably why, throughout the story, Mubārak presents 'Alī in different personae (as mentioned earlier) to talk to the Prophet, but with the same message to understand the reality of 'Alī. Although the Prophet had heard this message from the angel Gabriel before embarking on the journey to the *Chihil-Dunyā*, now it was time to hear it from 'Alī himself. Moreover, the divinity of 'Alī is proclaimed from 'Alī's own tongue:

من علی و یگانه ذات من است<sup>52</sup>  
ولک دینکم صفات من است  
از من آید پدید کن فیکن  
گر بخواهم جهان پس بیرون  
من رئوف و رحیم و رحمان  
من علی العظیم قرآن

I am 'Alī and my essence is unique,  
It is my attribute to perfect your religion.  
From me originates 'be!' and 'it is'<sup>53</sup>,  
For if I want to create a world.  
I am the Sublime Magnificent of the Qur'ān,  
I am knowledgeable, gracious and merciful.



As we can see, several Qur'ānic expressions, which refer to God either as a name or attribute, are directly used in this verse to express the Pamiri Ismā'īlī *ghulāt* idea of 'Alī as the unique creator (*khāliq*) of the universe and its centre (*madār*).<sup>54</sup> He is called the Sublime Exalted and Magnificent ('Alī-*u al-'azīm*), Gracious (*Rahmān*) and Merciful (*Rahīm*) one, whose existence is both necessary and possible because of his generosity. Here one should bear in mind the very fact of the classic Islamic philosophical discourse concerning God as the necessary (*wājib*) and possible (*mumkin*) existence (*wujud*) to which Mubārak refers in the verse.<sup>55</sup> Although he does not go further into examining this issue, he asserts that 'Alī as God is both the possible and necessary existence and that, being the cause of existence, all other beings exist only through him. He, then, is the one who, through desire, makes it possible for other beings to exist and guides them to know the reason for their existence. Accordingly,

the Prophet Muhammad, as the last divinely chosen guide for humanity, had to determine the source of his existence and guidance through discovering God's mystery in the world of divine secrets. Hence, now, when the mystery of God's names and attributes is directly revealed by him, 'Alī sends Muhammad to the remaining thirty nine worlds to see and discover the custom (*sunnat*) of the divine world and the power (*qudrat*) of its king:

نگر آن سنتی که نیده نبی نظر آن قدرتی که شنیده نبی

Look at the custom that you have not seen before,  
Grasp the power that you have not heard before.

As a result, Muhammad is engaged in a faithful dialogue with an angel (*parī*) surrounded by light (*bā nur pīchīda*) in the thirty-ninth world. From the conversation with the angel, he discovers that it was 'Alī, who told the inhabitants of the forty worlds that in three thousand years a messenger of God named Muhammad would arrive to complete the divine mission. Furthermore, the Prophet asks the angel some questions concerning the creation and age of the world. The angel replies that the foundation of the world was launched (*bunyād guzāsh*) by God a thousand *awtād* ago. The angel then explains that one *awtād* is three thousand *qarn* and that one *qarn* is three thousand years. Consequently, the Prophet is shocked by this revelation and falls to the ground, unconscious. When he opens his eyes, he sees 'Alī holding a cup of wine and offering him a drink in order to understand the miracles he has seen and mysteries about which he has heard. For the source of the offered wine was the divine kingdom (*wilāyat*) of 'Alī:

گر از این جام جمله نوش کنی ز عجایب به جمله هوش کنی  
کین می از باده ولایت ماست عالم و این جهان ولایت ماست

As you drink from this cup all in all,  
You will be aware of all miracles at once.  
For this wine is from the wine-house of my kingdom,  
The Universe, including this world, is my kingdom.<sup>56</sup>

Wine, in Islamic mysticism, symbolises spiritual ecstasy, which intoxicates the mystic soul to lose its individual consciousness and find its universal consciousness in the presence of a vision of the Beloved.<sup>57</sup> The Prophet is offered the wine of gnosis (*may-i ma'rifat*) to drink, in order to understand the miracles of the *Chihil Dunyā* and the true essence of its king. When the Prophet drinks the cup of wine, he directly witnesses the presence of God and makes confession about 'Alī's divinity:

ز ابتدا تا به انتهاست علی مختصر گویمت خداست علی

'Alī is the beginning and the end,  
To tell you in short; 'Alī is God.

With this confession, which concludes the testimonies of all of the preceding prophets, Muhammad's journey in the divine world comes to an end and he is sent back to the realm of physical reality, to Medina. Upon his arrival, he goes straight to Fātima's house, where 'Alī was also present but asleep, and gives her the ring that 'Alī gave him in the *Qāf*. Thus, the Prophet, by fulfilling his promise, realises the truth behind his journey to the world of divine secrets in which 'Alī stands for both, the *zāhir* (outer) and *bātin* (inner) meaning of the divine revelation.

The Prophet's journey to the *Chihil Dunyā* is depicted by Mubārak as a moment (*vaqt*) of true spiritual experience in which Muhammad lived for a thousand years, passing through various stages of discovery (*kashf*) in order to understand the esoteric (*bātin*) meaning of divine revelation. This allegory intends to provide basic support for Mubārak's argument concerning the divinity of 'Alī and his role as the true interpreter of divine revelation. For this, the Prophet first had to see with his own eyes 'Alī in the realm of divinity then in the realm of the physical world convey the message to the community of Muslims to follow 'Alī and his descendants as religious guides. The idea of the Prophet seeing 'Alī in the *Mīrāj* and speaking to him as if God was speaking, frequently appears in most of the post-Alamut Nizārī literature, such as the famous *Kalām-i Pīr*.<sup>58</sup> Mubārak's account of this mysterious event, however, tends to be more in the line with the *ghulāt* belief than official Ismā'īlism; he is very

keen to stress his fundamental argument that Muhammad actually saw and spoke to God and that he was ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. The following *bayt* will suffice to illustrate this argument:

چو به مراجع رفت پیامبر بجز از مرتضی نبید دیگر  
جز ز ذات علی نبید نشان گفت الحق توبی علی زمان

As the Prophet reached the point of his Ascension,  
He saw nobody, but Murtadā,  
He saw no sign, but the essence of ‘Alī,  
He said: “You are the Truth, O ‘Alī of the age!”

One should bear in mind, however, that Mubārak deals with the issue from the very principle of Ismā‘ilī doctrine of the esoteric (*bātin*) and exoteric (*zāhir*) interpretation of religious matters. His presentation of ‘Alī overlaps both his physical and spiritual attributes while discussing the Prophet’s spiritual experience in the *Chihil Dunyā*. ‘Alī is the one whom the Prophet meets before (as a human being), during (as the Lord) and after the journey (again as a human being). In other words, ‘Alī here stands for the sublime manifestation of divine unity, the core principle of the *zāhir* and *bātin* of the religious universe. Likewise, as the king of *wilāyat*, ‘Alī is the symbol of guidance and the embodiment of all guides.

In conclusion of the *Chihil Dunyā*, Mubārak interprets two of the most frequent quotes by the Shī‘is *aḥādīth* concerning the role and importance of an Imam from the Ismā‘ilī perspective. Firstly, “If the world were devoid of the Imam, even for a moment, it would convulse with all its inhabitants”. Secondly, “Whoever dies without recognition of the Imam of the Time, his death would be a death of an ignorant one and the place of the ignorant is hell”. The issue of the Imam has already been explored in the previous chapter, when discussing Mubārak’s concept of the beloved and the guide.<sup>59</sup> However, the question that now arises is to what extent Mubārak’s deployment of these two *aḥādīth* recapitulates his main arguments in the treatise. To answer this question, one should bear in mind that the poem has a didactic purpose, and that it addresses specific audiences as a guidebook for the recognition of the essence (*dhāt*)

and attributes (*sifāt*) of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Therefore these two *aḥādīth* in the treatise serve as the means of justification for what follows, if one recognises or rejects ‘Alī and his Imamate. In other words, the message that Mubārak seeks to convey is that there is a reward (*thawāb*) for what is recognised, and a punishment (*‘iqāb*) for what is rejected. One of the remarkable points in both interpretations is the stress on the knowledge (*ma’rifat*) of the Imam of the Time, whose recognition, as Mubārak agrees with the prophetic epistemology, begins with the recognition of oneself.<sup>60</sup> Through the *ma’rifat* of the Imam, the seeker first recognises himself, his cause of existence and future destiny, and then he falls in love (*muḥabbat*) with the source of the *ma’rifat* and desire to walk in the path (*tariqat*) in order to determine the truth (*haqīqat*).

Thus, Mubārak presents the Prophet Muhammad, as a perfect example of the seeker, who through his journey to the *Chihil Dunyā*—the world of divine secrets—finally found the source of divine knowledge and guidance. It was after this journey that the Prophet, on his final pilgrimage (*hajj-i padrud*) from Mecca to Medina, in the place called *Ghadir-i Khumm*, proclaimed ‘Alī as his successor and unveiled his Imamate in the realm of physical reality as the perpetual institution of a human guide. As a source of guidance, the Imamate will continuously enhance in ‘Alī’s progeny until the day of resurrection.

## CONCLUSION

Mubārak-i Wakhānī’s importance lies in his ability to both incorporate the major elements of Islamic mysticism as discussed by other eminent Sufi sages and also to present them in a context of the Ismā‘īlī beliefs and practices of a particular cultural tradition: Pamiri Ismā‘īlism. In doing so, he produced an elegant infusion of mystical thoughts, which, overlapping the fundamental points of Ismā‘īlī esotericism and Sufis mysticism, make Mubārak’s work original in its own right. He, indeed, was a unique religious scholar of that place and time, who sought to implement his quest for God through mysticism. Likewise, he made a great contribution to the intellectual tradition of Nāṣir-i Khusraw in

Badakhshan, writing commentaries on the Qur'ān and the Shī'ī version of the prophetic Tradition. Although Mubārak's manuscripts, a huge collection of poetry and prose, were never published, handwritten copies spread all over Badakhshan on both the Tajik and Afghan sides of the border, where numerous of his students and disciples lived.

In order to follow the text of Mubārak's works and their contextual implications, one has to bear in mind the historical and doctrinal settings in which Ismā'īlism developed in the region. The Islamisation or indigenisation of Islam in the Pamir principalities was a long process involving shifting identities, in which Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *da'wa* played a pioneering role. This, of course, does not mean that the potential existence of some kind of Islamic beliefs in the region prior to the *Da'wat-i Nāṣir* should be ignored, for there is insufficient historical evidence either to reject this hypothesis or prove the authenticity of the *da'wat* as the first mission of Islam to be launched in Pamir and Badakhshan. Nevertheless, this study had argued that it was the Ismā'īlī mission of Nāṣir-i Khusraw that embraced the various pre-Islamic beliefs and practices of the region in its doctrinal framework and later led to the establishment of the indigenous faith of the *Panj-Tanī*. It is a faith which became a matter of the religious identity for the Pamiris. The development of Ismā'īlism in the region was divided into two historico-doctrinal periods: the *Da'wat-i Nāṣir* and the *Panj-Tanī*, division of which is empirical rather than categorical in nature. It was during the second period, especially in the post-Alamūt era, that Ismā'īlism took shape in Pamir and, with the penetration of some elements of the Twelver Shī'ism and Sufism brought by the new *dā'i* asylum-seekers, obtained its unique form of Pamiri Ismā'īlism.

This study for the first time tried to compile Mubārak's biography as a Sufi, poet, astronomer, paper-maker and painter, who was born and spent his whole life during the nineteenth century in a remote mountain area of Pamir, which was geographically, intellectually and economically isolated from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, his intellectual capacity, as Bertels rightly notes, made him indeed 'the Avicenna of Badakhshan'. Apart from being a mystical poet, Mubārak was also a musician, astronomer, papermaker and painter. Mubārak's *Baland-maqām*, a musical instrument

to be used for the devotional songs, was an innovation in the cultural life of nineteenth-century Pamir. It later inspired the local *rūbāb* masters to create various forms of *rūbāb* with various means of deployment based on the example of the *Baland-maqām*. Mubārak's astronomical tools are still in use by his compatriots; they believe in the accuracy and appropriateness of the *Sang-i āftāb-bīn*, for their geographic context, more than in the Islamic *Shamsī-hijrī* calendar when it come to determine the Persian New Year (*Navrūz*).

Producing paper was one of the challenging, but most remarkable tasks that Mubārak had to perform in his economically disadvantaged context. In nineteenth-century Wakhān, paper was a very expensive imported commodity for the small number of the educated population who had to deal with it in their everyday lives. There was no regular demand for paper and, therefore, local and foreign merchants were not interested in selling it. This was probably the main reason why Mubārak produced his own hand-made paper using a special local technique and mechanical tools. It is held that all of his works are written on his own-made paper, which tends to be of very high quality.

Mubārak's artistic ability was demonstrated in his calligraphy, book design and painting. The *Naqsh-i dālān* is Mubārak's finest work of art, where he used various colours—very rare to find in his time in Wakhān—in order to create a lasting masterpiece. In addition to calligraphy, other artefacts involved in that exhibition include paintings of various types of representational images of humans and animals, as well as images of unusual mystical objects.

As a respected religious scholar, artist and poet, Mubārak is best remembered for his contribution to Pamiri Ismā‘īlī mystic thought as a result of his enormous amount of poetic works. Although poetry could have served him as a vehicle for the self-expression of his personal mystical experience, it was argued here that his own experience had a strong relationship to the religious tradition to which he belonged and the cultural environment in which he lived. In fact, his personal mystical experience, expressed through his poetry, is a reflection of the religious tradition of the Ismā‘īlīs of Pamir. This work, therefore, aimed to establish Mubārak's

importance for scholarly studies as well as the Ismā‘ilī community, not only as a mystic poet, but also as an intellectual representative of Pamiri Ismā‘ilism in the nineteenth century. His theosophical arguments were not original in a sense of their doctrinal approaches, but the methods and religio-cultural context in which he deployed them were unique in themselves. He elaborates on such philosophical and psychological issues as knowledge, love, unity, perplexity and illusion with a Sufi language, but in an Ismā‘ilī religious framework.

Knowledge for him promotes belief in God as well as assists the understanding of the divine revelation. Describing belief as a power (*himma*) of the heart, he asserts that it is a human response to the divine call and that there is no need to prove its authenticity, but merely to experience this spiritual aspect of human life through selfless love.

Love ('ishq) is understood as the vehicle of belief in divine cause and the only possible way to see and accept divine secrets. For love, contrary to reason, does not need to question the unquestionable nature of divine majesty; it is neither the subject nor the object of ontology. Contrary to reason, whose location is the mind, the house of love is the heart. Mubārak agrees with the general Sufi concept that the heart is parallel to the mind as a locus of knowledge, and that love for God should be a thoughtful process of realisation (*dark*) and appreciation of the divine beauty and acceptance of its spiritual reality. In other words, he argues that, in order to fall in love with God, the seeker should begin by learning (*khwānīsh*) in the sense of physical reality to obtain sufficient knowledge (*dānish*) about the path (*tariqat*) to God (in his case Ismā‘ilī *tariqat*), before proceeding towards the knowledge of the divine (*ma‘rifat*). The second stage is a stage of personal experience of travelling inwardly in which *ma‘rifat* finally brings the seeker, whose status is now changed to that of 'lover', to the source of truth or the Beloved. The Beloved, who for Mubārak is the Ismā‘ilī Imam of the Time, is the object of the spiritual quest as well as the source of guidance. Thus, these two stages are crucial in finding God, or, as he puts it, the quest for spiritual happiness, in awakening the seeker's soul; for the human soul itself is potentially aware of its origin, but needs to be motivated by knowledge.

Mubārak's didactic narrative poem, the *Chihil Dunyā*, supports the theory that Ismā'īlī doctrines in Pamir developed in harmony with the cultural diversity of the region and so obtained their unique indigenous form. Naturally, this uniqueness, which is manifested in the ways in which Ismā'īlī beliefs are observed, does not overshadow the core principle of Ismā'īlī doctrine—the belief in the spiritual authority of the Ismā'īlī Imam of the Time. In his argumentative religious discourse, Mubārak theorises the popular Ismā'īlī belief in the divine nature of the Ismā'īlī Imam, whose spiritual representative is 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. In fact, what Mubārak argues for is the divinity of 'Alī in the world of divine secrets, referred to as the 'Forty Worlds'. By providing the testimonies of the six eminent prophets of the Abrahamic religions, each of whom are qualified in understanding a particular aspect of God's essence, Mubārak asserts that 'Alī is the manifestation of the divinity of the divine unique in the realm of spiritual attributes. His ultimate point, thus, is to establish the very Ismā'īlī mystic argument that the light of 'Alī, as the source of spiritual illumination, was originally embodied in Adam and then began transmigrating through the six eminent prophets as the symbols of six levels of spiritual emanation from the appearance to the perfection of the religious universe.

The consequence of the Prophet Muhammad's *Isrā'* and *Mi'rāj* is the main theme of the *Chihil Dunyā*. What is particularly distinctive about Mubārak's approach to this mysterious event is that he is dissatisfied with the results of the ascent. For, as he argues, it created confusion and perplexity in the Prophet Muhammad's mind concerning the divine nature; instead of God, whom he wished to see, he saw the face of his own cousin and son in-law, 'Alī. That is why he asserts that the Prophet had to be taken to the second ascent, a journey to the *Chihil Dunyā*, the intermediate world between the physical and spiritual worlds, in order to discover the secrets of God and determine the truth about 'Alī. It is in the *Chihil Dunyā* that the Prophet's quest for truth is fulfilled and the main goal of his prophetic mission is defined. He realises that the *Chihil Dunyā* is the spiritual kingdom (*wilāyat*) of 'Alī and that its physical manifestation is the Imamate as the eternal period in the religious universe that

takes over the temporary period of the prophethood (*nubuwat*), which started with Adam and ended with Muhammad. Hence, for Mubārak, the Imamate, as the perpetual institution of the human guide, is more important than the prophethood and ‘Alī, as a symbol of the Imamate, is more privileged than Muhammad.

The poem *Chihil Dunyā* is a *Panj-Tanī* handbook about the divinity of ‘Alī in the realm of spiritual reality. Although the poem is a polemic discourse, where the personality of ‘Alī is over exaggerated beyond his true human capacity, it somehow tries to disclose the human nature of God, and vice versa—the divine essence of the human beings as the only masters of the universe. It canonises the fundamental indigenous belief in God manifested in a human form. A significant point that Mubārak makes in the Prophet Muhammad’s second *Mī’iāj* is to establish a close human-divine relationship; God is described as a close, imaginable and perceivable deity who possesses a human form and can be approached as well as addressed by the human beings. The manifestation of God in the form of ‘Alī was the only possible way in which the Prophet could actually see the beauty of the divine face and experience a true moment of the divine presence in himself.

Thus, Mubārak was an Ismā’īlī Sufi, who employed the Sufi language, symbolism and methods in the Pamiri Ismā’īlī esoteric context to elaborate his own mystical ideas. His case once again proves that Sufi forms of faith and worship are not separate from Islam in general or its various branches in particular, as some claim, but are rather the core principles of Islamic spirituality and amongst its most beautiful and peaceful forms of religious expression.

## ENDNOTES

1. Of 747 distiches, five are given as quotations from Hāfiẓ and Bīdil.
2. These two famous Prophetic *ahādīth* of the Shī‘ī version (see Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, 332–34) are quoted by Mubārak in the original Arabic and presented as the subtitles for this part of the poem.
3. It is worth emphasising that, although Abī Ṭālib, who brought up Muhammad and was very supportive of him during his Prophetic mission, is not regarded as a ‘Muslim’ in the general Islamic context because he did not officially convert to Islam. Yet in the Shī‘ī tradition, especially in Ismā‘īlī esotericism, Abī Ṭālib is portrayed as the primordial source of divine light. For instance, in one of the *qasīdas* sung during the traditional religious ceremony of *madō*, the light of Abī Ṭālib (*nur-i Abī Ṭālib*) is described as the source of the creation of the entire universe and the reason for its existence: “If there was not the light of Abī Ṭālib, Adam, the universe, and heaven would have not existed”.
4. Several Prophetic *ahādīth* refer to this point. For instance, “The first creature of God was the light of Muhammad...I was a Prophet when Adam was still between water and clay”. See al-Bursī, *Mashāriq al-Anwār al-Yaqīn*, 112.
5. For this, refer to the Qur’ān (5:67): “O Apostle! Proclaim the message which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord, if thou didst not, thou wouldest not have fulfilled and delivered His message.”
6. According to some Ismā‘īlī sources, such as al-Tusī’s *Taṣawwurāt*, the creation of human beings from the physical angle is represented by the six eminent Prophets: Adam as semen, Noah as sperm, Abraham as blood, Moses as embryo, Jesus as bone and flesh, and Muhammad as the complete human form. See Badakhchani, 139.
7. This esoteric argument is a fusion of the aforementioned *ḥadīth-i qudsī*: “I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known, so I created the world”, and a saying from the *Fasl*: “God, the Exalted created everything for the sake of mankind, and created mankind for His own sake”.
8. These *ahādīth* attributed to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib are quoted in *Kalām-i Pīr*, a very well-known and *Panj-Tanī* source in Pamir, to which Mubārak undoubtedly had easy access. For further details on the book, see Wladimir Ivanow, ed., *Kalām-i Pīr: A Treatise on Ismā‘īlī Doctrine, Also (Wrongly) Called Haft Bāb-i Shāh Sayyid Nāṣir* (Bombay, 1935), 79–84.

9. For a detailed account of the term, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 6, s. v. “*Mawlā*”.
10. “God is the Lord (*Mawlā*) of those who believe” (7:11). “Grant us forgiveness and have mercy upon us. You are our Lord (*Mawlānā*)” (2:286). Also see the other Qur’ānic verses, such as 6:62 and 10:31. As for the Prophet’s sayings, there is a famous Shī‘ī *hadīth*, which is also recognised by the Sunnis, believed to be said by the Prophet in Ghadir-i Khum (in his last pilgrimage from Mecca to Medina): “‘Alī is the lord of all those whom I am their lord. O God, love him who loves ‘Alī and hate him who hates ‘Alī”. See (for the Sunni source) Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 5, 419, and (for Shī‘ī source) al-Qādī al-Nu‘mān, *Sharḥ al-Akhbār*, vol. 1, 99.
11. There is a strong traditional belief among the Pamiri Ismā‘ilis that human beings, as the most honoured creature of God, genetically possess a beam (*shu‘ā*) of divine light in their forehead, which symbolises the human intellect, enabling them to have superiority over other animals and jinns.
12. According to Ismā‘ilism, during the phase of the Prophethood, there were Imams or the *hujjats* (proofs) for each of the six law-giving Prophets respectively; Adam–Seth (Shayth), Noah–Sam, Abraham–Malik al-Salām (some source like *Kalām-i Pīr* name Zoroaster), Moses–Aaron (Hārūn) and Joshua (Yusha bin Nun), Jesus–Sham‘un al-Ṣafā’ or Simon the Rock (Simon Peter), Muhammad–‘Alī. For more details refer to *Hast Bāb*, *Taṣawwurāt* and *Kalām-i Pīr*.
13. For the Qur’ān, see 6:75: “And we showed Abraham the spirituality of the heaven and the earth so that he might be among the men of certitude”. For Ismā‘ilī authorities, refer to Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭusī, *Āghāz va Anjām*; “Through the light of manifestation Abraham will witness all that which is issued of presence of the Almighty, in the smallest particle of his own existence, unveiled from the veil of concealment”, p. 54.
14. The term *mushrik* (i.e., a person who associates somebody with God as an object of worship), derived from the Arabic verb *sharaka* (to associate), has a complicated application in the Qur’ān and the Muslim tradition. It refers to the pre-Islamic idolaters of Arabia as well as being polemically used against the Jews, the Christians and even some Muslim sects. For the relatively recent research on the subject, see Gerald R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Mubārak probably employs the term in relation to those Muslims who deny the *wilāyat* of ‘Alī or the Imamate.
15. The Qur’ān (28:44) “You were not [O Muhammad] on the side of the west, when we decreed the command to Moses, nor were you a witness”.

16. This phrase is from the Qur'ān (7:143), where Moses asks God: "O my Lord! Show to me that I may look upon Thee. God said: By no means Canst thou see Me? But look upon the mount; if it abides in its place, then shalt thou see Me".
17. It should be noted that *qiyāmatī* here, refers to all those ideas that were put forward during the Alamūt period by Imam 'Alā Dhikrihi'l- Salām. See chapter 1 for more details.
18. It is traditionally believed in the popular religious tradition in Islam, especially in Pamiri Ismā'īlī rites, that the saints, according to their degree of 'holiness' (*buzurgī*), posses a miraculous spiritual power called the 'blessed breath' (*dam-i mubārak*) which is capable of not only healing a sick person, but even bringing a person back to life.
19. This verse is a direct reference to the Qur'ān (57:3): "He is the beginning and the end, the manifest and the hidden and He is the knowledge of everything"; Mubārak replaces the third personal pronoun 'he' used in the scripture with the second personal pronoun 'you' in order to address Jesus, as he testifies to the sanctity of 'Alī at the outset of his birth.
20. Al-Ṭūsī, 13.
21. For more details concerning Jesus' perception in the Islamic context, see the Qur'ān 3: 35–62
22. "The similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: 'Be!', and he was".
23. *Pāt* is a short version of *pā-yi tu* (lit. your leg).
24. The Qur'ān recognises Jesus as the spirit of God and as the perfect man: "We sent Our spirit and it assumed for her [Mary] the likeness of a perfect man" (19:17).
25. Wladimir Ivanow, ed. and trans. *Kalām-i Pīr*, 81 (76 English translation).
26. Here Mubārak is inspired by the aforementioned Prophetic *ḥadīth* that says: "God is known only in the Man of God".
27. There is no better way to describe how passionate the Persian poets were about the Prophet's Night Journey and Ascent than to quote Schimmel: "The poets, especially in the Persian and Persianate areas, have depicted his mysterious event through increasingly fantastic and grandiose image, using all their imagination to vie with one another in fanciful description of the Prophet's journey through sphere. Most of the great epic poems in Persian include, after the praise of God and eulogy for the Prophet, long description of the heavenly journey, in which every conceivable rhetorical device is used to give the reader at least a faint idea of this unique event." Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill

NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 165. For more references on the Ascension theme in Islamic mysticism, see Nazeer al-Azma, “Some Stories on the Impact of the Story of the Mi‘rāj on Sufi Literature” *The Muslim World* 63, no. 2 (1973): 93–104. Abul Ela Affifi, “The Story of the Prophet’s Ascent (*Mi‘rāj*) in Sufi Thought and Literature” *Islamic Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1955): 23–27. F Colby, “The Subtleties of the Ascension: al-Sulamī on the Mi‘rāj of the Prophet Muhammad” *Studia Islamica* 44 (2002): 167–183. James Morris, “The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Mi‘rāj” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107, no. 4 (1987): 629–52.

28. The commonly employed authentication hint to the *Mi‘rāj* is the Qur’ān (17:1): “Glory to God, who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (*Masjid al-Harām*) to the Farthest Mosque (*Masjid al-Aqṣā*)”.
29. For a brief account on *al-Burāq*, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, s. v. “Burāk”.
30. For the *aḥādīth* dealing with ‘Alī’s mystery and his secrets revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, see *Kalām-i Pīr* (78): “O ‘Alī, thou wert hidden with all the Prophets, and thou hast become manifest with me”. “Thou art the book of God. Thou art the mystery of God because no one knows thy mysterious substance except God. The mystery of God is revealed in his words, which all deal with the exalted position, both mine and thine”.
31. The Qur’ān (41:53) “We will show them Our signs in the horizon and in their souls, until it is clear to them that it is the truth”.
32. For all four lines of Hāfiẓ’s verse, see M. Bārī, ed., *Kulliyāt-i Shamsiddīn Muḥammad Hāfiẓ-i Shīrāzī*, (Tehran: Nashr-i Zamān, 2001), 142.
33. There is a *fāṣl* (saying of the Shī‘ī Imams), believed to be said by ‘Alī b. Abi Ṭālib in the battle of Jamal (656) between the two rows of soldiers, which is: “I am the face of God” referring to the Qur’ān (28:88): “All things perish but His face”.
34. For the Qur’ān, see Sura 41, verse 6: “I am a man like you.” For *ḥadīth*, “Verily God created man in his own image.”
35. Here the reference is made to the Qur’ān (13:7), the second part of the verse “But thou (Muhammad) art a Warner only, and for every person there is a guide.”
36. It is a direct reference to the Qur’ān (5:67) “O Prophet, proclaim the message which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou dost not, thou will not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission.” It is believed by the Shī‘īs that the Prophet Muhammad actually did fulfil God’s wish and proclaimed

'Alī as his successor (*wasi*) in a place called Ghadir-i Khumm in his last pilgrimage.

37. Islamic doctrinal belief that Muhammad is the last in the line of the monotheistic Prophets and the seal of prophesy is usually justified through the Qur'ān (30:40).
38. For Ascension stories in the Muslim tradition, see *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet: Mi'rāj nāmeh* [translated from the Arabic by Mir Haydar]; introduction and commentaries by Marie-Rose Séguy; [translated from the French by Richard Pevear]. London: Scholar Press, 1977.
39. For the *ḥadīth*, see *Kalām-i Pīr*, "I have a time with God to which even Gabriel, who is pure spirit, is not admitted".
40. Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 245.
41. For more details on the significance of the number forty in the Abrahamic religious context, see Schimmel, 245–253.
42. For a general account about *chilla* in Persian folklore and Sufism, refer to *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 5, s. v. "Čella".
43. For a relatively recent account of al-Tirmizī's work, refer to Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, trans., *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism: Two Works by al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi* (Richmond, Surrey: Cruzon, 1996).
44. Reynold Nicholson, ed. and trans., *The Kashf al-Mahjūb. The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, (Leiden, London, 1911), 214–228.
45. For details about the types of prayer and forms of meditation concerning 'the call for help' from the *rijāl al-ghayb*, refer to Sayyid Muzaffar 'Alī Shāh, *Jawhar-i Ghaybī* (The Hidden Substance) (Lucknow, 1886), 664–667.
46. 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns min Ḥadrat al-Quds* (Kalkatuh: Matba'-i Lisi, 1858 or Cairo, 1989).
47. Mikhail Andreyev "Chiltani v sredne-aziatskikh verovanii," in *Vasiliy Vladimirovich Bartoldu: Turkestanskie ucheniki i pochitateli*, (Tashkent, 1927), 334–348.
48. Andreyev, 344–345.
49. The story was recorded from Alidodova Reza, who lived with her parents in the Dirch village until 1950s, in August 2004. She asserted that, as a child, she was told this story in front of the shrine by a local *pīr* named Mirjān. The fusion of the story is as follows: "Once upon a time, there was a king desperately begging God to give him a son, the future successor to his kingdom, but his prayers were not fulfilled until he met a wandering

*darvīsh*, who gave him an apple and suggested he shared it with his wife in order to have a son. The *darvīsh* nevertheless warned the king that the birth of his son would bring tragedy to the king and his kingdom. But this warning could not persuade the king to change his mind. Nine months, nine days and nine hours later, the queen gave birth to something extraordinary, resembling a large bird's egg. The king was angry and did not know what to do with this creature when suddenly he heard a voice telling him to crack the egg. When he did so, to his great surprise forty very small babies emerged and surrounded him. The king observed that, of the forty babies, one was pretty but the rest very ugly; in order to avoid public humiliation, he decided to hide the thirty-nine ugly ones in a secret place and keep the pretty one at court in order to show him off to his friends and officials. But the tragedy that the *darvīsh* warned of happened; on the day of presentation, he could not find the pretty baby. He suddenly disappeared, like the other thirty-nine babies. The king went mad and his kingdom was destroyed; the villages and cities were devastated by hunger and plague. The only way to save the remaining survivors was to find the *darvīsh* and ask him for help. When the *darvīsh* was finally found, he prayed to God, and God sent those forty babies, who were actually the forty pure men, to prevent the people's sorrow and establish stability. Thus, since then, it became a duty of the *Chihil-Tanān* to act as God's agents in helping people in times of sorrow.”

50. For a detailed account of Qāf, refer to *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., s. v. “Kāf”.
51. Henry Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, trans. Leonard Fox (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995), 1. Corbin provides a very remarkable interpretation of ‘ālam al-mithāl as well as how to understand spiritual reality. A quotation from the aforementioned article will suffice to illustrate this point: “The existence of this intermediate world, *mundus imaginalis*, thus appears metaphysically necessary; the cognitive function of the Imagination is ordered to it; it is a world whose ontological level is above the world of the senses and below the pure intelligible world; it is more immaterial than the former and less immaterial than the latter...It is the cognitive function of the Imagination that permits the establishment of a rigorous analogical knowledge, escaping the two terms of banal dualism: either ‘matter’ or ‘spirit’, a dilemma that the ‘socialisation’ of the consciousness resolves by substituting a choice that is less fatal: either ‘history’ or ‘myth’ (Corbin, 11).

52. This is a Qur'ānic phrase (5:3): "This day I have perfected *your religion*". It is used by Mubārak to argue that 'Alī, as the symbol of the Imamate, is the perfection of Muhammad's religion.

53. This is a direct quotation from the Qur'ān (2:117), where God as the all-powerful creator is exalted: "To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a matter, He says to it 'be' and it is."

54. It seems obvious that several Ismā'īlī authors wrote about 'Alī in a *ghulāt* style, which, however, did not undermine their Ismā'īlī approach to the issue. For instance, Fidā'i Khurāsānī (nineteenth century), who was close to Aga Khan III, has many poems glorifying 'Alī as God. For more details, see Aleksandr Semyonov, "Ismailitskay oda, posveshyonnay voplosheniyam Aliya-Boga" *Iran* 2 (1928): 1–24. Aleksandr Semyonov, "Ismailitskiy Panegirik Obozhestvennomu Aliyu Fidayi Khurasanskogo" *Iran* 3 (1928): 51–70. For *Ghulāt* see Tamima Daou Bayhon, "The Second-Century Shī'ite Ghulāt. Were They Really Gnostics?" *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 5 (2003): 13–61.

55. This metaphysical idea was first developed by Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) in his *al-Shifā*, *Ishārāt va Tanbīhāt* and other philosophical works, where he describes God as the Necessary Existence (*wājib al-wujūd*) and the first cause of the very existence of the universe, whose existence is possible by virtue of itself, necessarily by virtue of another. This theory was later rejected by several Muslim scholars, the Sunnis, the philosophers and the Shī'is alike. Ghazālī and al-Rāzī, for instance, could not accept Avicenna's idea of the emanation. Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who misunderstood Avicenna from Ghazālī's works, objected to the methodology of Avicenna's proof of the existence of God. Al-Shahristānī, as an Ismā'īlī theologian, claimed that the term *wujūd* cannot be deployed analogically (*bi'l-tashqīq*) towards God; for God is 'beyond being and non-being'. Only Al-Ṭusī in his commentaries on *Ishārāt va Tanbīhāt* tried to defend Avicenna's theory of the emanation, that from one only one can emanate, by providing this philosophical theory with a theological justification. For more details, see David Herbert, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Godman Lenn, *Avicenna* (New York, 1992).

56. It is probably an inspiration from "And their Lord will give them pure wine to drink" (Q.76:21).

57. For more details on the theme of 'wine' in Sufism, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (New York: Chapel Hill, 1975), 288.

William Chittick, “Jami on Divine Love and the Image of Wine” *Studies in Mystical Literature* 1, no. 3 (1981): 193–209.

58. In *Kalām-i Pīr*, however, this idea is softened by the claim that ‘Alī is the Beloved of God and therefore God can manifest himself in and speak to the Prophet through the body of ‘Alī. “When I (Muhammad) was taken to the heavens on the night of the Ascension (*Mīrāj*)...I saw an angel who sat on a chair (*minbar*) of light, and other angels were standing around him. I asked Gabriel who this angel was. Gabriel replied ‘Come near, and greet him’. When I went near and greeted him, I saw that he was my cousin, ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib...O my Lord dost Thou speak to me, or ‘Alī? God replied: ‘I love no one more than ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib. This is why I spoke to thee by the tongue of ‘Alī, so that thy heart shall be quiet and not filled with awe” (*Kalām-i Pīr*, 82).
59. It is also worth mentioning that there are certain theoretical references in the Qur‘ān, the Shī‘ī versions of the Prophetic traditions, which justify the divine authority of the Imam. For instance, the two Qur‘ānic verses that are most often quoted by the Ismā‘ilīs are: “On the day when we call all men through their Imam” (17:71), “We have reckoned all things in the manifest Imam” (12:36). Likewise, there are several other *ahādīth* supporting the above argument: “God is known only by and in the Man of God...Recognition of God is the recognition of the Imam of the Time”. (Kulaynī, 336). Al-Ṭusī calls the Imam the ‘eternal Face of God (*wajh Allah al-bāqī*), the ‘Supreme Attribute’ (*sifat-i ‘a‘zam*), the ‘Great name of God’ (*nām-i buzurg-i khudāy*), the ‘Manifestation of the Supreme Logos’ (*mazhar-i kalima-yi a‘lā*) and the ‘Truthful Master of the Age’ (*muhiqq-i vaqt*). (Badakhchani, 122).
60. Mubārak quotes the famous Prophetic *ḥadīth*: “Whoever recognises himself recognises his Lord”



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# INDEX

Aaron (Hārūn), brother and legatee of Moses, 206

‘Abd al-Ahad (1885–1910), *amir* of Bukhārā, 65

‘Abd al-Rahmān Khān (d. 1901), Afghan king, 2, 53, 101–102

Abraham, 13, 17, 170–171, 205–206

Adam, 13, 17, 22, 166–168, 171, 176

‘ālam-i dīn (religious universe), 163, 165, 167, 176, 179, 183,

‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661)  
‘Alī, 30, 162, 166–167, 177–178, 199, 203, 205, 219

Murtadā, 153, 174, 198

*Shāh-i Mardān*, 19, 30

*Shāh-i Wilāyat*, 163, 164, 198

‘Alī b. Asad (eleventh century), local Badakhshani ruler, 11, 32, 34, 48

Al-Bīrūnī, early Islamic scholar and scientist, 55

Al-Tha‘ālibī (d. 1038), early Islamic author, 28

akābīr (army noble), 59–60

‘aks-i mubārak (sacred picture), 46

Ansārī, ‘Abdullāh (d. 1089), Sufi author, 72, 110

ārāmgāh (lit. place of tranquillity, i.e., tomb), 45

‘aql-i kull (universal intellect), 75, 114–115

‘arif (gnostic), 129, 153, 167, 180

‘āshiq (lover), 119, 129, 135, 137, 153, 177

‘āshūrā (commemoration of Imam Husayn), 5, 44, 52

āstān (threshold, shrine), 48–49

‘Atṭār, Farīd al-Dīn (d. 1220), Sufi master, 8, 24, 98

Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), Islamic philosopher and scientist, 211

‘Azāzīl (Azrail), 75

Badakhshī, Sang Muḥammad, 14, 23, 26

bakht-i nakū (good fortune), 117, 119

bātīn (esoteric), 3, 9, 17, 76, 147, 163, 165

Bertels, Andrey, author, 3–4

Bīdil, Mirzā ‘Abd al-Qādir (d. 1720), Persian poet, 55, 131–132

Bistāmī, Bāyazīd (d. 875), Sufi master, 84

Bukhārā, 28–29, 55

buzurguvār (saint), 44, 60, 70, 190

charāgh-rūshan, indigenous custom, 5, 42, 51, 58, 68

chihil dunyā (forty worlds), 10, 17, 131, 161

chilla-khāna (chamber of retreat), 68, 72, 79

chilla-nishinī (forty days of spiritual retreat), 16, 79, 82–83, 187

Corbin Henry, author, 193, 210

dād-i ḥaqq (divine gift), 136

dānish (knowledge), 117–118, 122

dānish-mand (educated person), 63

Dār al-Salām (the world of peace), 192, 194

*dawr al-kashf* (cycle of epiphany), 165

*dawr al-satr* (cycle of concealment), 36, 41, 163, 165–167, 183

*dhāt* (essence), 192, 198

*dhikr* (remembering God), 9, 18, 76, 78–79, 90

*dīdār* (spiritual congregation), 9–10, 18, 25, 101, 148, 155, 177

*dīhqān-hisāb* (farmers calendar), 92

*dil* (heart), 115, 125–126

divine love, 9, 17, 19, 118, 128, 134, 136, 145, 149

*fanā’* (annihilation), 9, 122–123, 148

*farmān* (instructions, guidance of the Imam of the Time), 40, 45, 56, 78

*farmān-khāna* (lit. house of orders), 46, 68–69

Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh Qājār (d. 1834), 40

Fāṭima bint Muhammad, 5, 31, 45, 48, 164, 193, 197

*Ghadīr-i Khumm*, event, 199, 206, 209

*ghulāt* (lit. exaggerators), 195, 197, 211

*gūsha-yi khilvat* (corner of retreat), 75

*ḥadīth*, 16, 22, 116, 139, 156, 205, 208, 212

Hāfiẓ, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 1389), Persian poet, 128, 132, 157, 180, 208

*haft ḥudūd-i dīn* (seven boundaries of religion), 56

*ḥāl* (spiritual state), 71, 73, 81, 134, 137, 179, 184–185

al-Ḥallāj, Ḥusayn b. Mansūr (d. 922), 84, 116, 120, 128–130, 133

*hama ūst* (all is He), 175, 183

*ḥaqīqat* (religious truth), 17, 73, 119–120, 181, 199

Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d. 1124), 35, 49

*himma* (spiritual power), 149, 151, 202

al-Ḥujwīrī, ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān (d. 1072), Sufi author, 189

*ḥujjat* (lit. proof), 32, 35, 40, 56, 77, 206

Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240), Islamic scholar and mystic, 128, 208, 222

Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995), 28

*‘ilm al-qulūb* (science of the hearts), 171

Isaac (Ishāq), 171

Ishmael (Ismā‘īl), 171

*‘ishq* (passionate love), 9, 134, 202

Ismā‘īlī Da‘wa in Central Asia

al-Nasafī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 943), 28

*dā‘ī* (missionary), 32, 76, 148

*dā‘ī al-du‘āt* (the chief missionary), 32, 56, 77

*da‘wat-i baqā’* (lit. subsistence mission), 68, 110, 124

*da‘wat-i fanā’* (lit. annihilation mission), 68

*Da‘wat-i Nāṣir*, 6, 7, 14, 28, 31–32, 35

*isrā’* (the Prophet’s night journey), 178–179, 180, 185, 203

Isrāfīl (Seraphail), 15

Istakhrī (d. 993), early Islamic author, 29, 55

*Imām-i Zamān* (the Imam of the Time), 9, 42, 77, 146, 176

Jabrā’īl (Gabriel), 75, 164, 167, 172, 178, 181, 183–184, 212

Jāmī, ‘Abd al-Rahmān (d. 1492), Sufi author, 189, 209

*jawhar* (substance), 165, 176

Jesus Christ, 13, 107, 129, 163, 165, 174, 175, 177, 185

*jihād*, 28, 69, 73

Judaism, 106, 171

Kabul, 39, 64

*Karbalā*, event (680), 31, 51, 75

Karl Marx, 3

*kātib* (scribe), 11, 15

*khwājagī* (household), 57–58

*khalīfa* (local religious leader), 8, 11, 43, 56–58, 60, 63, 90

*khwāniš* (learning), 117–118, 202

*khayāl* (imagination), 84, 114, 119, 126, 137, 193, 210

*khayriyyāt* (alms-giving), 58

*khik* (Wakhī), 21, 64

Khiḍr (mystic prophet), 45, 75, 151–152, 173, 190, 193

Khorog, provincial town, 14, 31

*khudāyī* (serving free meal), 44, 58

*khūja* (local religious clan in Pamir), 11–13, 25, 33, 41, 59, 70, 109

*ma’rifat* (divine knowledge), 17, 115–117, 171, 187, 202

*ma’shūq* (Beloved), 134, 146, 155

*mādhūn-i aşghar*. See *khalīfa*

*madō* (devotional poetry and music), 5, 9, 24, 51, 88, 109, 205

*māl-i sarkār* (religious taxation in Badakhshan), 57–58, 112

*malik* (ruler), 29

Malik Jahān-Shāh (Bābā ‘Umar-i Yumgī), 34

*mastī* (intoxication), 70, 73, 101

*Mawlānā* (our Lord), 38, 168, 170, 208

*Mathnavī* of Rūmī, 88, 129–130, 157

*ma’sūm* (sinless), 153

*mazār* (shrine), 30, 45, 48

Medina, 197, 199, 206

*mi’rāj* (the Prophet’s spiritual ascent), 132, 163, 165–167, 178, 180, 185, 194, 203

Mīkā’il (Michael), 75

*mingbāshī* (village representative of the *mīr*), 60, 63

*mīr* (local political ruler), 59–60

Mirzā ‘Ābid, Mubārak’s scribe, 14, 31

Moses, 13, 163, 172–173, 186, 207

Muhammad, the Prophet, 5, 73, 97, 105, 107, 152, 165, 172, 180, 210, 212

Muhammad-Shāhī Ismā‘ilīs, 13, 26, 38–40, 62

*murīd* (disciple), 37, 50, 56, 57, 58, 61, 151, 155

Muṣṭafā (the Prophet), 153

*mustajīb* (novice), 56, 57, 59, 60, 109

*mustaqarr* (established Imam), 13, 26, 39

*mustawda’* (trustworthy Imam), 13, 26

Nādir Shāh-i Afshār, 39

*nafs-i kull* (universal intellect), 75

*namāz* (prayer), 76–78, 143

Nāṣir-i Khusraw, 6, 10, 14, 28, 31–35, 42

*navkar* (guard), 59–60, 63  
*nīstī* (annihilation), 71  
**Nīzām al-Mulk** (d. 1092), 28, 32  
**Nizārī Ismā‘ilī Imams** (Qāsim-Shāhī and Muhammad-Shāhī branches)  
‘Alā Dhikrihi’l- Salām (d. 1166), 77, 207  
**Amir Musharraf** (d. 1764), 39  
**Hasan b. Sayyid ‘Alī**, 30  
**Hasan ‘Alī Shāh** (1804–1881), 13, 155  
**Rukn al-Dīn Khurshāh** (d. 1257), 130  
**Shāh Rādī al-Dīn** (d. 1509), 38  
**Shāh Khalīl Allāh** (d. 1871), 43  
**Sultān Muhammad Shāh** (d. 1957), 18, 26  
**Tāhir Shāh**, 39, 65  
**Noah**, 13, 163, 165, 169, 170, 205–206  
*nubuwat* (prophethood), 18, 163, 165, 168, 174, 183, 204  
*nūjūm* (astrology) 64, 92

*padar-khwānd* (godfather), 68  
*Panj-Tanī* (the Fivers), 6–7, 21, 23, 36, 41, 104, 165, 178, 200, 204–205  
*pīr* (master, guide), 6, 33, 36–37, 40, 56–60  
*pīrān-i mārifat* (masters of gnosis), 41  
*pirship*, 8, 40, 56, 58, 118  
*pisar-khwānd* (godson), 118  
*pīsh-vāz* (porch), 68–69  
**principality**, 14, 53, 59, 63

*qādī* (judge), 59–60, 63, 65, 101, 109  
al-Qādī al-Nū’mān (d. 974), Ismā‘ilī jurist, 77, 111, 148, 206  
*Qandīl-Nāmā* (Candle Book), 42–43, 51

*qaṣā’id-khwānī* (reciting qaṣīda songs). See *madō*  
**Qāsim-Shāhīs** of the Aga Khan, 13, 38, 40, 56

**Rābi‘a al-Adawiyya** (d. 801), female Sufi sage, 135  
*ramziyyāt* (symbolism), 92, 94  
*rastī* (awareness), 71  
*ra‘iyat* (commoners), 59, 201  
*rubāb* (six-stringed lute), 89, 90  
**Rūdakī**, Abū ‘Abd Allāh, Tajik-Persian poet, 3, 28  
**Rūmī**, Jalāl al-Dīn (d. 1273), 8, 24, 87–89, 125, 129–130, 134, 140  
*rūza* (fasting), 77

*sabk-i hindī*, Idian style of Persian poetry, 21, 85, 128  
**Şālih**, Khwāja, local *pīr*, 38–40  
*sadda*, district division in Wakhan, 59  
*şāhib dilān* (the possessors of the heart, i.e., Sufis), 149, 171  
**Sāmānīds** (872–999), Persian dynasty, 28, 47  
**Sāmānī**, Nāṣr b. Aḥmad (914–943), 28  
Samarqand, 28, 29  
**Sanā’ī**, Ḥakīm (d. 1131), 199  
*sang-i āftāb-bīn* (observation stone), 94  
*sang-i nishān* (signpost stone), 94  
*sarbadār* (military chief), 39  
**Satan** (Iblis), 17, 125, 132, 142, 186  
**Sayyid Sūhrāb-i Valī** (Sayyid Alavī), 12, 25, 33, 34, 38, 49, 70  
*shadda*. See ‘āshūrā  
*Shāgun* (Navrūz, i.e., Persian New Year), 92, 94

Shāh Ni‘matullāh-i Walī (d. 1431),  
 Sufi *Shaykh*, 4, 42, 51  
*shamshīr-zanī* (sword-beating), 44  
*Shari‘at*, 16, 76–78, 104, 111, 181  
*shāthiyāt* (ecstatic expression), 83  
 Shī‘ī Imams (Ithnā‘asharī and  
 Ismā‘īlī branches)  
 ‘Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn (d. 714), 31,  
 45  
 Hasan b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib  
 (d. 669), 6, 26, 30  
 Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib  
 (d. 680), 5–6, 30–31, 43, 44, 51  
 Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), 24,  
 51, 156  
 Mūsā al-Kāzim (d. 799), 41  
 Mustansir bi Allāh (d. 1094), 49  
 Shīrāzī, al-Mu‘ayyad fi’l-Dīn  
 (d. 1078), Ismā‘īlī *dā‘ī*, 32, 111  
 shrines, 30, 33, 44–45, 188, 190  
*ṣifat* (attributes), 125, 212  
*sīna-zanī* (beating chests), 44  
*sīrāt al-mūstaqīm* (the straight path),  
 137  
*sīrr* (secret), 132, 185  
 spiritual desire, 81, 108, 136  
 spiritual quest, 9, 18, 122, 124, 135,  
 139, 152, 177  
 Surkh-afsar, Fazl‘alī-Bek, 14, 23, 26  
*sulūk* (spiritual progress), 118, 150  
*Symposium*, 134

Tabrīzī, Shams (d. 1310), the beloved  
 of Rūmī, 24, 89, 129  
*ta‘līm-i dīnī* (religious education), 64  
*ta‘wīl* (spiritual hermeneutics), 77,  
 111, 117, 134, 141  
 Tajik, 3, 10, 19, 30, 51, 55, 85, 162  
*takhalluṣ* (poet’s “pen name”),  
 86, 87

*tanjīm*. See *nūjūm*  
*tariqat* (spiritual path), 17, 119, 128,  
 199, 201  
*tarjī-band* (return tie), poetry form,  
 18, 86, 125  
*tarkīb-band* (composite tie), poetry  
 form, 86  
*Taṣawwuf* (Sufism), 64, 113  
*ta‘yīd* (divine inspiration), 137, 154,  
 185  
 Tirmizī, Ḥakīm (d. 912), Sufi author,  
 188–189, 203  
 Transoxiana, 7, 27, 28, 31–32, 36, 55,  
 62, 64  
*Turfa-Jā‘h* (the place of enjoyment),  
 192, 194

‘ulamā’, 28, 32  
 ‘Umar-i Khayyām, Persian poet, 3,  
 86, 145, 258  
 ‘urf va ‘ādat (custom), 78  
*uṣūl al-taqiyya* (prudence,  
 dissimulation), 7

Wakhān rulers (pre- and post-  
 Islamic periods)  
 ‘Alī Mardān, 59  
 Mīr Maskā, 63  
 Qah-Qaha, 30, 47  
 Sapikh-Chūpān, 30  
 Zamr-i Ātash-parast, 30  
 Zangibār, 30  
*walī* (saint), 37, 52, 163, 189  
*waḥdat* (unity), 38, 67, 83, 115, 119,  
 121, 128  
*waṣl* (link), 67, 122  
*wahy* (divine revelation),  
 116–117, 137, 147, 155, 164,  
 166, 173  
*wilāyat*, 34, 52, 118

*wilāyat-i ‘Alī*, 117, 163, 166,  
170–174, 192, 203

*yaqīn* (certitude), 77, 125, 153, 155  
Yār Bek (d. 1707), Badakhshani  
ruler, 55

*zāhid* (ascetic), 74

*zāhir* (exoteric), 17, 147, 152, 163,  
169, 198

*zakāt* (religious taxation), 54, 77

*ziyāratgāh* (the place of pilgrimage),  
45, 48



